

**SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY
ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Bolton**

Inspection date January 2007

Reporting Inspector Mrs. Pamela Parden

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 316
 Appropriate authority The governing body
 Chair of Governors Mr. Paul Lochery
 Headteacher Mrs. Frances Lysyj
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Mrs. Ann Blackwood
 Date of previous inspection July 2001

| The Inspection judgements are: | Grade | |
|--|--------------|--|
| Overall effectiveness of the school | 1 | 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 | 1 | |
| Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education | 1 | |

The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St.Thomas of Canterbury is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parishes of St. Thomas of Canterbury, St. Edmund and St. James the Great in Bolton. Housing ranges from privately owned, detached or semi-detached and terraced properties to council owned property. The school has a wide socio-economic mix of learners whose ages range from 4 to 11 years. The admission number is 45. There are 316 pupils on roll of whom 309 are Catholics. 8.9% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. 38 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and 4 have a statutory statement of special educational need. All 13 permanent teachers are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

The overall effectiveness of the school is outstanding. It is a very welcoming, happy and caring school with school life clearly based on Gospel values as embodied in the Mission Statement. It provides a clean, stimulating environment in which each individual is respected, cared for and loved and in which the talents of all are nurtured. All staff work well as a team and are good role models. They are dedicated, committed and hard working and strive to maintain high standards so that the school grows and develops. The strong Catholic ethos ensures outstanding provision for the pupils' spiritual and moral development. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is well supported by the parish priests, the governing body and the senior leadership team. Very good provision for Religious Education and prayer and worship and the positive relationships within the school are further strengths.

Improvement since the last inspection

No key issues were identified at the last Section 23 Inspection in July 2001. However the school has continued to move forward. The school now has a process for rigorous self evaluation in Religious Education and for reviewing the effectiveness of the School Improvement Plan. Appropriate procedures are in place to monitor the teaching and learning in Religious Education and an assessment system, linked to levels of attainment, has been successfully introduced. Additional quality resources are gradually being built up. Learners are offered a rich variety of planned opportunities and experiences which weave prayer and worship into the whole Catholic life of the school.

Capacity to improve

The headteacher has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and development needs. She is encouraged by the governing body and well supported by the senior staff which includes the Religious Education co-ordinator. Accurate self-evaluation, together with effective monitoring and assessment arrangements, have led to secure and structured improvement planning. The school's capacity to improve is therefore very good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement development plans already agreed and established.

THE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. They "ensure the Catholic, religious character of the school inspires, unifies and gives shape to every aspect of school life". This is reflected in the Mission Statement which is reviewed annually. Governors are well informed and provide both challenge and support working effectively in committees and individually. The parish priest of St Thomas of Canterbury has a significant and valuable role as the link governor for Religious Education and each class also has an identified link governor. The high quality of the headteacher's leadership together with good support from senior staff are major factors in the ongoing development of the Catholic life of the school and the fulfilment of its mission. All staff are hard working and committed to the school's Catholicity. Appropriate strategies for self-evaluation are in place leading to detailed identification of priorities and the drawing up of the School Improvement Plan. Relationships throughout the school are very good and learners are encouraged to exercise responsibilities. They act as peer tutors, playground pals and school counsellors. Home, school, parish links are outstanding and support is provided for the parish Sacramental Programme. Networking between Catholic schools in the area and links with the associated Catholic high school are very successful.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The quality of collective worship is outstanding. Teachers follow the school's regularly reviewed comprehensive written policy. The school is committed to helping staff, pupils and parents to develop a personal relationship with God through prayer and worship and it provides a rich variety of opportunities and experiences to this end. The parish priest, supported by the priests from the other linked parishes, plays an inspiring and active role. The head teacher leads weekly assemblies and weekly class led assemblies in rota are linked to the *REvision 2000* programme. All assemblies are well planned, of a high standard and involve learners in their preparation and presentation. In an excellent assembly observed during inspection the Foundation children focused on the special individuality of everyone and the importance of God's love. All classes pray at regular times daily with a weekly extended worship time related to a particular theme. There is also a weekly Liturgy Club and a prayer group led by the Religious Education co-ordinator in the recently refurbished room for quiet prayer and reflection. All these activities are enhanced by the outstanding focal points for prayer in each classroom and around the school. The prayer observed during inspection was reflective and thought provoking and the pupils were reverent and respectful. It has a strong influence on their spiritual and moral development. They are encouraged to explore various methods of private, individual, meditative and reflective prayer in formal and informal settings. Parents share assemblies, liturgical celebrations and Masses and the staff also share times of prayer and reflection. The Religious Education co-ordinator offers support and advice to colleagues on all aspects of prayer and worship and ensures that quality resources are available.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good overall and in some areas outstanding. The outcomes of assessment and recording of individual children's ability and progress enable appropriate targets to be set. Pupils generally meet or exceed these targets and high standards are achieved. The school's systems for monitoring and evaluation confirm this. The school recognises the need for more extended written work, especially at Key Stage 2, and is addressing the issue. Most learners use appropriate terms and vocabulary and respond very well in discussion and role-play. This was evident in the lesson in Year 1 when the pupils acted out Mary and Joseph's visit to the temple where they met Simion and Anna. Learners know and understand the Catholic beliefs and way of life. They are encouraged to relate this to their own lives, to follow Jesus's example and to show their love of God in making appropriate choices. They know about, and learn to respect, other faiths and cultures. There is obvious good knowledge and use of the Bible. Learners realise the importance of the family, school and parish and of using their talents. They confidently share thoughts, use research skills, and explore and discuss ideas. They enjoy their lessons especially when appropriate tasks and challenges are set. They co-operate and respond intelligently in a capable, mature way. Behaviour is outstanding and this is achieved through mutual respect and the schools belief that every child matters. Learners show care for those in need both in school and beyond through prayer, good works and fund-raising.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some outstanding features in Foundation and each key stage. All teachers have a secure knowledge of the Religious Education curriculum and share their own faith with their pupils to enhance their learning. Thorough planning includes clearly stated objectives linked to all ability levels. Assessment activities, moderation and detailed records of individual pupils' attainment inform future planning to support progress. Creative use is made of quality resources and interesting tasks are set to challenge all abilities. High expectations and work set to match individual pupils' needs were seen to result in the best possible outcomes. The excellent use of teacher assistants ensures that all abilities benefit. Classroom management and organisation are very good. This was particularly evident in one class discussing ministries in the church with learners working in groups and sharing or feeding back ideas. They were co-operative, attentive and enjoyed the lesson. The use of information communication technology and audio-visual aids enhances learning. The school recognises the value of interactive white boards and aims to increase them to one in each classroom. Parents are happy with their children's achievements in Religious Education. They are regularly informed of work to be covered and a number help in school.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. The school fully observes the national and diocesan requirements. It is extremely successful in its mission, "to promote the highest professional standards in the delivery of a truly Catholic education within the context of our school, family and parish". The school follows a very clear policy of recognising each child's needs with special attention to social, moral and spiritual development. Curricular aims relate largely to the *REvision 2000* programme. They outline objectives for each key stage matching the content and relevant skills to the age and development of learners. Objectives are identified in pupils' responses and linked to constructive marking, assessment, monitoring and recording. Prayer, worship and liturgy are closely woven into all work in Religious Education. Thorough medium and short term planning is consistent throughout the school and assessment and evaluation inform teachers of learners' needs. Teachers share the example of their own personal faith and experiences to enhance learning and to support spiritual and moral development. Links with other curriculum areas enrich provision. The school works well in ensuring that the Religious Education curriculum is broadly based. Work on other faiths and cultures is undertaken throughout.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are outstanding. The governors are committed to its importance as central to the school's whole life and ethos. The headteacher is well supported by the senior leadership team in her drive to ensure quality and enthusiasm for Religious Education. Her experience and example are instrumental in leading the school forward to provide high quality teaching and learning. A comprehensive policy for Religious Education is in place and is reviewed regularly. The subject is very well led by the co-ordinator who has good management skills. She is enthusiastic, dedicated and conscientious. She scrutinises pupils' work, monitors and records teachers' planning and delivery and evaluates resource needs. An action plan from outcomes is drawn up to assist in the construction of the School Improvement Plan. She has led and implemented the introduction of the diocesan programme for assessment and the recording of learners' progress. She provides help and support for staff and, together with the headteacher, attends all relevant diocesan meetings or courses and keeps staff updated on any relevant new initiatives. She also informs governors of all work and developments related to curriculum Religious Education. The parish priest attends, and sometimes leads, in-service training and, alongside the senior leadership team, makes a significant contribution to curriculum Religious Education, prayer worship and the spiritual life of the whole school family.