

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Sacred Heart is an average-sized one form entry Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. The school has organised its own independent nursery. It serves the parish of Sacred Heart, Colne in east Lancashire. This is an area of below average social and economic circumstances. The majority of the pupils are of white British heritage. The age range of pupils is from 3-11 years. The indicative admission number is 30 and there are presently 210 pupils on roll. 190 of the learners are baptised Catholics. 5.8% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals and 42 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs with 6 children having a statutory statement of special educational need. 8 out of the 9 teachers (90%) are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Sacred Heart is a good Catholic school. Provision in the Foundation Stage has improved during the present academic year as staffing has become more settled. The work taking place to extend the school building is at present restrictive but on completion will greatly enhance the quality of accommodation and facilities. The headteacher has worked hard in obtaining the grants necessary to complete this work which will complement the quality of the school's outdoor provision. This includes a prayer garden and a woodland area. The governing body, which has recently undergone a number of changes of personnel, the headteacher and officers from Salford Diocese, are together planning the development of effective support strategies to further improve the good practice in the school. The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Investors in People and the Healthy Schools Award. Members of staff are positive role models for pupils and are dedicated, committed and hard working. The school has a warm, welcoming and caring environment in which all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils are happy, well behaved, polite and friendly and display a good attitude to learning. They enjoy coming to school and feel safe, secure and valued. Teaching in curriculum Religious Education is good overall. The Religious Education curriculum is well planned and further enhanced by the provision for prayer and worship and the quality of relationships.

Improvement since the last inspection

Since the last Section 23 inspection the school has addressed the key issue of assessment in curriculum Religious Education by implementing the Salford diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines from the spring term 2007.

Capacity to improve

The capacity to improve is good. The headteacher and governors are developing an action plan for reviewing the Mission Statement and creating an action plan for the school to include all governors and staff in identifying areas for development. The governing body has recently undergone significant changes and is attaining a position from which it can bring challenge to the leadership of the school as well as support and encouragement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the Salford diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education implemented by the school in the spring term 2007.
- Implement a programme for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in curriculum Religious Education as a means of raising standards
- Ensure that all learners receive 10% of teaching time for Religious Education

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good. The governing body has recently undergone a significant change in personnel including the appointment of a new chair of governors. The governors and leadership of the school are in the process of developing an action plan with the aid of officers from the Salford diocese which will identify good practice and areas for development. The Religious Education co-ordinator keeps governors informed of the Catholic life of the school by writing an entry in the headteacher's report to the governors each term. The governors' curriculum committee invite subject co-ordinators to attend their meetings in order to give more detailed reports on new developments in their subjects. Each class in the school has a link governor and during May 2007 a Religious Education governor was appointed to work closely with the Religious Education co-ordinator. The Religious Education curriculum is well planned. It is further enhanced and complemented by the provision for prayer and worship for learners, staff and parents through class liturgies and voluntary prayer opportunities during the liturgical year. The Religious Education co-ordinator has led the implementation of the Salford diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines and actively raises the profile of prayer in the school. The monitoring and evaluation of curriculum Religious Education is an area for development. The school supports the Sacramental programme which is co-ordinated by the parish sister with the help of a team of catechists some of whom are school governors. The children are given a voice in the school through the elected school council.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is good with some outstanding features. Every week there is a whole school assembly led by the headteacher, a Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 assembly led by each key stage teacher in turn and a Key Stage 2 assembly led by a teacher with the aid of pupils from the teacher's class. As part of the Key Stage 2 assembly the achievements of both children and staff are celebrated with nominations coming from both staff and pupils. During the course of the year each class prepares and leads prayer services based on the liturgical year to which parents are invited. The headteacher leads the staff in prayer at the weekly briefing meeting. During the liturgical seasons of Lent and Easter members of staff are invited to attend a weekly prayer service led by the Religious Education co-ordinator before the start of the school day. Children are also invited to attend a similar voluntary prayer service during the same liturgical season. The children's voluntary prayer service during inspection was well attended. The headteacher has built up an impressive bank of assemblies based on powerpoint presentations. The Religious Education co-ordinator has built up a file of liturgical celebrations and assemblies that span the full liturgical year. The file allows the school to evaluate and develop its collective worship. During the inspection both the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 assembly, based on the 'Road to Emmaus Story', and the Key Stage 2 assembly based on 'Mary is a special disciple' were good and engaged the children in singing, reflection and prayer. The parish priest celebrates Mass in school each term and on special occasions. The distance between the school and church prevents regular visits to church. Each classroom has a well positioned and thoughtfully presented focus for prayer. Three dimensional Religious Education displays are visible in the shared areas.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good overall. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have a growing knowledge and understanding of Catholic, Christian and world faith traditions. The scrutiny of children's work, teacher planning and completed assessment tasks shows that in relation to the level descriptors and attainment targets identified within the Religious Education programmes of study many learners achieve well relative to their below average starting point. The lessons observed during the inspection were good overall but the scrutiny of completed work in the children's exercise books showed that tasks did not always set sufficient challenge or opportunities for independent writing, particularly for the more able learners. Teachers regularly mark learners' work but the quality of marking is inconsistent and in need of further development. Where marking is at its best is when teachers write thought provoking questions and inform children how they can improve. The school has recently started to bring more structure to the assessment of Religious Education by implementing the diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education but this requires further development and evaluation. The school is encouraged to continue to adopt and develop the guidelines and to monitor and evaluate their outcomes.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good overall. All teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge both in their planning and their teaching. The lessons observed showed that children were set differentiated tasks with well organised teaching assistants able to support groups or individual children in the completion of their tasks. This was well illustrated in a Year 6 lesson based on the link between the Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit. During the lesson the children were engrossed in a powerpoint presentation recapping the events since the death of Jesus. The children showed good subject knowledge gained from previous lessons and rose to the challenge of answering thought provoking questions matched to differing abilities in the class. The teacher then set four differentiated tasks to match the ability groups in the class. The tasks ranged from making gift boxes for the gifts of the Holy Spirit to writing a news report based on an interview with St. Peter. Teaching assistants were well deployed, working with and supporting, specific groups to keep children focused on the successful completion of their tasks. This carefully planned and well taught lesson ensured that the children were both challenged and engrossed in their Religious Education. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards throughout the school to aid teaching and learning. The children displayed a good attitude to learning, listened attentively to their teachers and showed respect for each other. As a means of raising standards still further and as a means of quality assurance the inspector encourages the school to implement a programme for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in curriculum Religious Education.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The school has evaluated the quality of the Religious Education curriculum as good and inspection judgements support this evaluation. However the school should continue to review the time allocation for curriculum Religious Education to ensure that all learners receive 10% of teaching time for curriculum Religious Education as required by the Bishops of England and Wales. The high profile of Religious Education in the school is clearly visible through displays in shared areas and the presence of religious artefacts and a focus for prayer in every classroom. The school uses the Salford Diocese Religious Education scheme *REvision 2000*. This is supplemented by an annual cycle of religious activities that further stimulate children's knowledge and understanding of their religion and its traditions. There was also much evidence found in the exercise book scrutiny that the school encourages children to learn about other faiths and uses the diocesan guidelines 'World Religions and People of other Faiths' as a core document. During the inspection staff showed that they are sensitive to the individual needs of pupils. Members of staff have been trained in the use of the 'Rainbow Programme' which seeks to help children who have suffered loss. Teaching assistants take care during lessons to encourage and support individual pupils and, in some cases, groups of children to stay focused and learn. The school has prioritised establishing the Salford diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education as a means of tracking pupil progress and attainment. Curriculum Religious Education and collective worship work effectively together to ensure that both knowledge and understanding and spiritual development are promoted to the full. This was exemplified by the Key Stage 2 assembly based on 'Mary is a special disciple' when the children presented the work they had completed during an observed Religious Education lesson at a Key Stage 2 assembly.

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 evaluation. The governors demonstrate a real interest in the Catholic nature of the school and have recently appointed a Religious Education governor to work closely with the Religious Education co-ordinator in matters relating to curriculum development. The governors actively support the headteacher in promoting the school's Mission Statement and their shared vision of what a Catholic school should be. The dedicated leadership of the headteacher is augmented in curriculum Religious Education by the school's committed, enthusiastic and very hard working Religious Education co-ordinator. With the support of the headteacher the co-ordinator is leading the staff in implementing the Salford diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines in a form to meet the needs of the school. In consultation with the staff of the school the Religious Education co-ordinator has produced a 'levels of attainment in Religious Education' cohort file for each class. The cohort file makes the monitoring of both the progress of each child and the whole class easily identifiable in an effective and manageable manner throughout all key stages. The inspector encourages the staff to continue to implement these guidelines and to monitor and evaluate the outcomes. The recently appointed chair of governors and new governors are in a good position to monitor and evaluate progress.