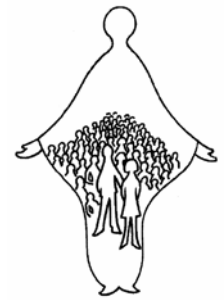


**SALFORD DIOCESE  
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. CLARE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**Victoria Avenue Higher Blackley Manchester M9 0RR**

Inspection date June 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 105554  
 Age range of pupils 3-11  
 Number on roll 420  
 Appropriate authority The governing body  
 Chair of Governors Mr. John Strogen  
 Headteacher Mr. Vincent Jones  
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Ms. Rhoda McNicol  
 Date of previous inspection June 2004

<b>The Inspection judgements are:</b>	<b>Grade</b>	Explanation of the Grades  1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	
Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school	1	
The quality of Collective Worship	2	
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	
<i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i>		

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

St. Clare's is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of St. Clare in Blackley, an area of social and economic disadvantage north of the city of Manchester. The majority of pupils live in council and rented housing association properties and their ages range from 3 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 60 and there are currently 420 children on roll of whom 353 are baptised Catholics. 36% are known to be eligible for free school meals and 63 learners have been identified as having special educational needs. 2 have a statutory statement of special educational need. Of the 18 teachers 15 (83%) are Catholics and 13 hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or equivalent.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

St. Clare's is a good school with some outstanding features. It is highly effective in offering its learners a good traditional Catholic education in a happy, calm, supportive and caring environment. It lives out its Mission Statement as "a loving place where everybody can grow, achieve and develop each day with the help of God and the community". Throughout the year learners, parents, staff and parishioners are given many opportunities through assemblies and Masses to strengthen their relationship with God. The successful Sacramental Programme is organised by the school and supported by the parish. The nominated governor for Religious Education is a parishioner who leads the "Little Church" during Sunday Mass. The school successfully promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the learners. All staff are strong positive role models for learners and are dedicated, committed and hardworking. They have a shared vision for the future of the school. Learners are very well behaved, friendly and polite. They have good attitudes to their learning. All learners, including gifted and talented and those with special educational needs, achieve well as a result of the differentiated curriculum which meets the needs of all children.

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

Following the last Section 23 inspection in June 2004 the school has successfully addressed all issues arising. Since the appointment of the present headteacher in 2005 the school has undergone tremendous change. With the appointment of a new deputy and 5 new teachers the senior management team has been strengthened. The governing body has also experienced significant change. Assessment and recording has been established and the school plans to link these with target setting and the introduction of tracking and profiling of the work of learners. Monitoring of teaching and learning is firmly established. The two adjacent buildings which house the school have been vastly improved allowing those who work and learn therein a fresh, bright environment conducive to education.

### **Capacity to improve**

The school's self-evaluation is thorough, objective and realistic. The leadership and management of the school have a clear, focused vision for the school. There is a genuine commitment to ensuring that all involved in the school community recognise the important role they play in the future development of this successful over subscribed Catholic school as it lives out its Mission Statement. The school's capacity to improve is therefore excellent.

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

- Continue to further develop the adopted assessment procedures in curriculum Religious Education using the diocesan guidelines on the levelling and tracking of pupils' work.
- Implement the diocesan guidelines on other World Faiths

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

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The Mission Statement, which was revised by staff, governors and pupils in 2006 permeates all aspects of the school's life and is prominently displayed throughout the school. The children's version of the Mission Statement is in the form of "Promises". They too are well displayed. The success of the school is due chiefly to the exceptionally strong leadership of the headteacher, the dedicated deputy and management team and the wholehearted support of the staff. The school benefits to the full from an active, knowledgeable and supportive governing body which discusses and revises Religious Education policies on a regular basis. A shared vision for the ongoing development of the school as a Catholic community is reflected in governor appointments of committed Catholic teachers to the staff and their policy that all new teachers should embark on the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. 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 co-ordinator for curriculum Religious Education and with staff and learners. Governors are informed of all matters relating to Religious Education in the headteacher's written and verbal reports and by visits to the school. The headteacher, 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. The school plays a prominent part in the parish Sacramental Programme which is valued as a successful part of school life.

## **THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

Provision for collective worship is good both in frequency and quality. It is a key feature of the school and pervades all aspects of school life. It is underpinned by a clear Religious Education policy which includes prayer and worship. Whole school Masses are celebrated at the beginning and end of each term, on Holy Days of Obligation and special Feast Days. Year 3 and 4 pupils celebrate with parishioners at a weekly Mass in church. Pupils attend other class Masses and non-Eucharistic services throughout the year and assist by reading at the parish Sunday Mass. The support of the parish priest and his involvement with these celebrations are appreciated and acknowledged by staff and parents. Assemblies and key stage celebrations are a regular feature of school life. The pupils plan special services and productions for Advent, Christmas and Lent, Holy Week and Easter and these are celebrated with the parish priest, governors, parents and parishioners. The quality of collective worship is monitored by the headteacher and co-ordinator for Religious Education. All learners observed during the inspection prayed with respect and reverence demonstrating a developing awareness of the importance of prayer in their lives. Displays and prayer focal areas in classrooms and throughout the school indicate that learners are encouraged to express their spirituality through prayer. The school continues to seek ways of improving this very good provision.

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

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good. Very clear and effective strategies and systems introduced since the 2004 inspection have ensured that this aspect of the school's life and curriculum have been prioritised in order that high standards be achieved and maintained. Learners enter the school at levels well below national expectations. Good progress is made in Foundation and by the end of Key Stage 1 they are able to relate verbally and in their pictorial and written work the stories of the life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. They know that God made them and His "Wonderful World" and that they are part of the family of the church. By the end of Key Stage 2 very good progress has been made. During the inspection learners were able to demonstrate knowledge of the sacraments, differing forms of prayer and 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 and are familiar with the Old and New Testaments. 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 oral and written work. Learners have very good factual knowledge of their faith and the origins of the Catholic Church. They enjoy the subject and take pride in their work. Across the whole community there is a feeling of self-worth and self-esteem. This has been enhanced by the introduction of the school council and playground friends. Pupils are developing a strong sense of responsibility and are aware of the needs of others. They support a number of worldwide and local charities.



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

The inspector agrees with the school that the quality of teaching and learning is good with some outstanding features. Teachers have high expectations for themselves and their learners. They work extremely hard to provide interesting and stimulating lessons using interactive teaching strategies with which to enthuse the pupils. They demonstrate a secure knowledge of the diocesan *REvision 2000* 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 learners 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. Assessments, based and levelled on diocesan guidelines are being applied and the school is encouraged to continue with this 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 eagerly and set to their work diligently.

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

The Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. The school has a clear up to date policy on Religious Education which has a very high profile in the school, both as a key element in school improvement planning and also in spending plans. At least 10% of teaching time is allocated to the subject. *REvision 2000* guidelines are followed and supplemented by activities relating to the liturgical year. Diocesan guidelines on other World Faiths have been introduced but the school is urged to implement these completely as soon as possible. The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning project has a positive effect on the overall provision, which is a frequent topic on staff meeting agendas. The curriculum is further enhanced through extra-curricular provision including sport, music, choir, cheer leading, and drama. Year 3 pupils experience a day's retreat at the Schoenstatt Centre in Kearsley, Bolton and the Year 6 pupils have a retreat day at Guardian Angels, Bury. The school successfully organises the Sacramental Programme and is supported by some parishioners. This, together with the "Little Church" and the pupils' readings during the Sunday Mass, adds to the quality of prayer and worship at St. Clare's. Curriculum Religious Education and prayer and worship are linked effectively together to ensure that both knowledge and understanding and spiritual development are promoted to the full. No learner is withdrawn from Religious Education lessons.

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

The school has assessed the leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education as good. Inspection evidence gathered judges them to be outstanding. The newly appointed deputy headteacher took on the role of Religious Education co-ordinator in 2007 since when a great deal of dedication, hard work and commitment, together with the support of the headteacher and parish priest, has resulted in improved policies and comprehensive records. This includes the use of monitoring and evaluation to determine and identify priorities for future development. The co-ordinator for Religious Education, 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 the through the involvement of diocesan advisers. She is well supported by the headteacher and staff and by the parish priest 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. Clare's which is now a vibrant learning environment.