

**SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. MARY'S
ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Manchester**

Inspection date January 2007

Reporting Inspector Mr J. Brierley

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

Type of School	Catholic Primary
Age range of pupils	3-11
Number on roll	340
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Mrs. R. Champion
Headteacher	Mr. D. Cunliffe
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Mrs. H. Wystepek
Date of previous inspection	January 2002

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	
Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school	2	
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	
<i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i>		

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a large one and a half form entry Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school with a 45 place nursery in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of St Mary of the Angels and St Clare in an urban district approximately three miles from the centre of Manchester. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage although the school does have a growing number of pupils from a variety of ethnic backgrounds some of whom have English as a second language. The age range of pupils is from 3-11. The indicative admission number is 45 and there are presently 340 pupils on roll including nursery. 313 children (92%) are baptised Catholics. 33% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals and 25 have been identified as having special educational needs with 4 having a statutory statement of special educational need. 13 out of 14 teachers (93%) are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a good Catholic school in which the leadership and management are working hard to raise standards. The school has a warm caring environment in which all the pupils are made to feel valued by the staff who act as positive role models. The Catholic ethos of the school is very strong with excellent provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development further strengthened by the very good links between home, school and parish. Pupils are well behaved, polite and friendly with a good attitude to their learning. The school's Mission Statement is not only visible in its written form in classrooms and shared areas but is also witnessed in the actions of the children and staff. The school is very successful in its aim *'to develop a partnership between pupils, teachers and parents'*. Teaching is good overall with some outstanding teaching observed during the inspection. Teachers are well supported by the excellent deployment of teaching assistants. Monitoring, evaluation and assessment of Religious Education are to be further developed. The school is involved with the local community, supports CAFOD and has established strong links with charities in Africa and Latin America. The dedicated headteacher leads the school well and has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Improvement since the last inspection

Since the last Section 23 inspection in January 2002 the school has continued to develop the quality of prayer and worship offered to the pupils in the classroom areas by improving classroom resources, providing in-service training for staff and the introduction of prayer boxes. The school has also introduced the Salford Diocesan assessment guidelines for curriculum Religious Education.

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to improve is very good. Thorough self-evaluation procedures are in place with judgements being objective and clearly based on factual evidence. The recently restructured senior management team has brought a renewed energy to the school's work and a shared vision for the school's future needs and developments. The School Improvement Plan identifies areas for development in Religious Education. The inspector agrees with the school's judgement about what it needs to do to improve

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish, monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the Salford Diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education implemented by the school in autumn 2006.
- Establish the planned programme for assessing, monitoring and evaluating curriculum Religious Education planning and teaching as a means of raising standards.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of St Mary's are good with some outstanding features. The inspirational headteacher and recently restructured senior management team have a clear vision of the nature of the Catholic school and the governors are active in their support of the school. The parish priest is the nominated Religious Education governor and a frequent visitor to the school. He takes a leading role in representing the governing body in supporting and challenging the school's leadership team on matters relating to the Catholic life of the school. He celebrates Mass for the children in both church and school. The leadership team are in the process of developing both collaborative and distributive leadership across the school as witnessed by the recent appointment of the Religious Education co-ordinator. The Religious Education co-ordinator is to work alongside the senior leadership team in developing an assessment, monitoring and evaluation programme for Religious Education. The Sacramental Programme is given a high profile within the parish community and is well supported by both home and school. The parish catechists who help the parish priest lead the Sacramental Programme regularly meet with Year 3 teachers. The quality of the relationships between governors and staff as well as staff and learners is exemplary. The children are cherished and their successes celebrated. The principles of the excellence and enjoyment curriculum reinforce the school's agenda that 'every child matters'. Learners are encouraged to exercise their responsibility through the elected school council and by acting as prefects.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The school has evaluated the quality of collective worship as good but the inspector disagrees with this evaluation and finds the quality of the collective worship to be outstanding. School Masses which parents are encouraged to attend are celebrated regularly in church and in school on special occasions. Each week the headteacher leads a Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 assembly. There is also a class led assembly for Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and a class led assembly for Key Stage 2 each week to which parents are invited. A rota for assemblies is agreed each term and teachers plan and record their assemblies as an aid to future planning. Golden Book assemblies celebrate the pupils' successes in every aspect of school life. The Key Stage 2 assembly observed during the inspection was based on the school's Mission Statement and led by a Year 5/Year 6 class. It was of a very high quality both in delivery and message. The assembly successfully illustrated how St Mary's is '*a caring and loving Catholic family where all its members are valued*'. During the assembly, at which parents were present, the children were respectful, reverent and active participants in singing hymns, praying together and private meditation. When children were selected by individual teachers for entry in the Golden Book the other children shared the selected pupils' joy. Children are encouraged to write individual prayers and place them in the school's prayer box inside the school entrance. The seasons and events of the liturgical year are also celebrated in school and in church as exemplified by the Christmas Eve Service led by the school. The school has produced a spiral bound 'Our School Prayer Book' which is presented to Year 6 pupils as they leave the school. The school is not complacent about its already high quality of collective worship and has planned a further review of the prayer and worship policy and staff training with regard to collective worship for the spring term 2007.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school has evaluated achievement and standards in Religious Education as good and the inspector would agree with this evaluation. Levels of achievement and standards of Religious Education are consistently good throughout the school. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have a good factual knowledge of their faith and show a genuine interest in their Religious Education lessons. The scrutiny of children's work, teachers' planning and lesson observations showed that the children are taught and use a good religious vocabulary and are able to talk with knowledge and understanding about their religion. The upper Key Stage 2 lesson observed during the inspection involving the 'hot seating' of a pupil in the role of Saint John Bosco indicated that pupils are encouraged to discuss moral issues and question aspects of their faith in a positive, relevant and challenging manner. Religious Education displays are prominent throughout the shared areas of the school and children's exercise books show that children are given very regular opportunities to record what they are learning about their faith. Teachers complete medium term planning at the beginning of each term and more detailed weekly lesson plans based on the Salford Diocese *REvision* 2000 guidelines. The school is bringing more structure to the assessment of Religious Education by implementing the diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education. The school is encouraged in its implementation of the assessment guidelines and to monitor and evaluate outcomes.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Although the inspector agrees with the school's own self-evaluation that the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good overall there are some outstanding features. All teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge both in their planning and their lessons. Most lessons observed were at least good with some lessons being outstanding. The outstanding lessons were those that challenged the children. In a Year 3 lesson on baptism the children were able to display a clear understanding of what they had learned and retained from previous lessons and then progressed into acting out the roles of the main participants in the baptism service. In another lesson on baptism children in a Year 3/Year 4 class were able to understand and explain the symbols of baptism as a result of the teacher's well planned lesson, clear teaching, use of probing and thought provoking questions and the setting of an appropriate task for pupils to complete. The children in both key stages displayed a very good attitude to learning, listened attentively to their teachers, showed respect for each other and concentrated well when working. The scrutiny of the pupils' work showed that children regularly complete tasks that are suitably challenging while providing a variety of methods by which the children can record what they have learned in Religious Education. Marking of pupils' work is carried out regularly and praises good work but teachers do not consistently '*contribute to the process of deepening the pupils' responses, in order to take the learning forward*', as required by the school's marking policy. The school's planned programme for more rigorous assessment, monitoring and evaluating of curriculum Religious Education planning and teaching, as a means of raising standards, is encouraged by the inspector.

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. 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. At least 10% of teaching time is allocated to Religious Education in all Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 classes. The school uses the Salford Diocesan 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. The school has prioritised the assessment of pupil's learning and understanding and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning of Religious Education as areas for development in the School Improvement Plan. Curriculum Religious Education and collective worship work effectively together to ensure that both knowledge and understanding and spiritual development are promoted to the full. Religious Education permeates the life of the school. '*Take what you have learned in this assembly and Religious Education lesson into the playground*' is the strong message from the school's headteacher and reported to the inspector by a member of the school council. Children's work from Religious Education lessons is very prominent in the school's entrance, school hall and in most classrooms. The study of other cultures and faiths has been enhanced by the recent purchase of relevant resource books and is an area which the school is looking to further develop.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education is good. The parish priest is a regular, almost daily, visitor to the school and helps, supports and encourages the headteacher and newly restructured leadership team in promoting their shared vision of what a Catholic school, at the heart of the Catholic community, should be. The governors, ably led by the chair, work closely with the headteacher and parish priest in evaluating the Religious Education provision. The dedicated leadership of the headteacher and the leadership team has been augmented by the recent appointment of a new Religious Education co-ordinator. With the full support and encouragement of the headteacher and leadership team it is planned that the co-ordinator will help lead the staff in further developing the schools procedures for the assessing, monitoring and evaluating of Religious Education and collective worship. The Religious Education co-ordinator has been encouraged and assisted in the implementation of pupil assessment in Religious Education by the assistant head who is also the school's assessment co-ordinator. There is an expectation of high standards emanating from the school governors and the leadership team. The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school reaches beyond the school gates and into the wider parish community through the high profile of members of the governing body and headteacher within the parish. As part of the Sacramental Programme parents and children are encouraged to attend Sunday Mass at which the headteacher and members of staff are present. The headteacher has accurately evaluated Religious Education in his school and identified how it can be made even better.