

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Margaret Mary's is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parishes of St. Margaret Mary and St. John Vianney in New Moston. The school is located in the north of Manchester on the border with Oldham. Pupils come from a wide variety of social backgrounds with a significant number from areas of some social and economic disadvantage. The large majority of children come from white British backgrounds with 9% of children having English as a second language. Indicators suggest that the children's ability on entry to the school is broadly typical of the national expectation for the age group. The age range of pupils is from 3 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 45. There are currently 272 pupils on roll including nursery. 239 of the pupils are baptised Catholics. 49 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and 4 have a statutory statement of special educational need. 11 of the 12 (92%) teachers are of the Catholic faith. The school has achieved the Active Mark, Arts Mark, the Manchester Inclusion Award, Healthy Schools Award, the International Schools Award and the Financial Management Standard.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. Since the last inspection the school leadership's efforts to raise standards in teaching and learning have been limited partly as a result of significant staff changes and long term absences. The governing body has been supportive of the headteacher but has not been sufficiently well informed to challenge the leadership and help ensure that school improvement is taking place. This has resulted in a significant change in the school's governing body with an Interim Executive Board being appointed early in the present academic year. The headteacher and reformed governing body will need to work together to meet the challenges the school now faces in order to improve the overall effectiveness of the school. Improvements to the monitoring and evaluation of the school by governors and staff are at a very early stage of development. Teaching in Religious Education is good overall with clear indications that the newly formed teaching staff are putting strategies in place which are raising standards, as illustrated during the lessons observed during the inspection. The school has a warm, welcoming and caring environment which seeks to cater for all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The personal development of children is good. During the inspection the pupils were well behaved, polite and friendly while generally showing a good attitude to their learning. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in Religious Education and provision for prayer and worship is good. Parents are encouraged to take part an active part in the life of the school.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 48 inspection the school reviewed the policy for prayer and worship and has more recently reviewed the school's Mission Statement, yet to be approved by the governing body. A system for monitoring and evaluating planning, delivery and assessment has been introduced but needs more rigour. Teachers are ensuring that Key Stage 2 pupils are recording extended pieces of writing in Religious Education.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation shows that the school is aware of its present position and a draft strategic plan for further developments in Religious Education has been produced. The Interim Executive Board, working alongside the school's leadership, provides the school with a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Produce and implement a Religious Education Action Plan which will be approved, monitored and evaluated by the governing body
- Further develop teacher skills in the moderation and levelling of children's Religious Education work as an aid to embedding assessment and establishing a consistent system for tracking individual pupil progress in Religious Education.
- Continue to establish a rigorous system for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in Religious Education

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are satisfactory. Since the last inspection the school has gone through a turbulent period as a result of significant staff changes and long term staff absences resulting in some disruption to teaching and learning. The improvements requested from the last inspection have been partially implemented but strategies for rigorously monitoring and evaluating the school's performance need establishing in order to bring about the sustained raising of standards. The governing body have supported the leadership of the school in maintaining the Catholic life of the school but the recently appointed Interim Executive Board will need to encourage and challenge the school's leadership in order to ensure that planned improvements are completed and evaluated. The inspector recommends that the school leadership and the newly formed governing body produce a Religious Education action plan prioritising the improvements to be made based on their own self evaluation and the content of this report. There are already signs of change through staff appointments, the implementation of a marking policy and teachers setting clear learning objectives for their children. Systems to enable the school to improve are in evidence but it is too early in the school year to judge whether the immediate improvements will be sustained. The school extends its links to the wider community through its support of both local and national charities, its links with other educational establishments and its work in gaining the International Schools Award. Children have a voice in the school through the school council and the house system.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The provision for collective worship is good overall. The school's Mission Statement declares, 'We aspire to deepen and kindle our relationship with God through prayer, worship and liturgy.' Since the last inspection the school has reviewed its policy for collective worship with plans to review it on a two year cycle. The policy sets out guidelines and provision for the development of prayer and worship throughout the school. By following the policy's guidelines the school ensures that provision for prayer, collective worship and liturgies is integral to the daily life of the school for both pupils and staff. Prayer and worship opportunities provide a range of settings to include music and song, art, dance, readings, drama, speech and silence for reflection. The parish priest celebrates class Masses each term in the convent chapel and Mass for Years 1 – 6 in church on special occasions. Assemblies are often based on the liturgical year and the curriculum Religious Education programme. Staff voluntarily attend collective prayer prior to their daily briefing session. The whole school assembles for prayer and worship led by the headteacher every Monday and assembles again every Thursday for class led assemblies to which parents are invited. Through collective worship children are encouraged to care about local, national and global issues and all school members can respond at their own level of faith and belief. During the observed class led assembly the children were well-behaved despite their attention being sometimes lost because the acoustics made it difficult to hear what was being said. This was particularly disappointing for the teacher and children who had put so much effort into preparing the assembly.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are satisfactory. Indicators suggest that on starting school the majority of the children's attainment is generally in line with the national expectation for the age group. The portfolio of assessed pieces of work shows evidence of progression through the school. The school monitors pupils through the completion of assessments each half term but the tracking of individual pupil progress and the measuring of achievement and standards in Religious Education are at an early stage. There are pockets of good practice in the school which need to be developed to bring about a consistency of approach and the establishing of a clear policy for monitoring and evaluating achievement and standards in Religious Education. A good example of the school establishing a consistency of approach in order to raise standards is through its marking policy. The scrutiny of exercise books from both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 showed that as from the beginning of the school year all teachers are marking to an agreed format to include thought provoking questions based on helping the children meet the lesson objective. If this quality of marking is sustained through the school year standards will rise and learning objectives will be met. Teachers provide a varied range of opportunities for children to achieve an understanding of their religion as witnessed in lessons observed during the inspection. The school should further develop teacher skills in the moderation and levelling of children's Religious Education work as an aid to embedding assessment and pupil tracking in Religious Education.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The overall quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good. All lessons observed during the inspection were at least satisfactory with some having good and occasionally outstanding features. Lessons are based on the diocesan programme of study for Religious Education and teachers use both medium term plans and

teacher developed short term planning to match the needs of their children. Lesson objectives are identified in lesson plans and in children's exercise books in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 classes. During the Religious Education lessons observed, as part of the inspection, teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge. In an Early Years Foundation Stage lesson the teaching was particularly rigorous and enthusiastic so that the children 'lived' the story of Noah and the ark in order to illustrate how God loves and cares for everyone in the world. Religious Education became fun and wondrous. In a Key Stage 2 lesson the teacher produced thought provoking questions by 'hot seating' herself as Mary after finding Jesus in the temple. Religious Education came alive. All pupil responses are valued and respected. As part of the school's strategic plan for Religious Education the headteacher and Religious Education subject leader have monitored teaching and learning in Religious Education through lesson observations and learning walks. The school is encouraged to continue embedding a rigorous system for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in Religious Education

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is satisfactory with good features. The school's Mission Statement is displayed. Religious Education displays celebrate children's work and the presence of religious artefacts enhances Religious Education as a core subject of the school. The school ensures that 10% of the length of the taught week is given to Religious Education for each Key Stage. This is being achieved in the Early Years Foundation Stage by linking Religious Education to the early learning goals and the extended activities in continuous provision. The school is working towards a creative cross-curricular approach to involve Religious Education. As part of its strategic plan the school is to introduce 'Godly Play' sessions into the curriculum with the intention of putting a sense of awe and wonder into their study of the scriptures. The Religious Education curriculum is further enhanced by extended curriculum time for prayer and worship opportunities, assemblies, liturgical and special celebrations. The Religious Education curriculum meets all national and diocesan requirements and promotes social cohesion through the study of other faiths and the identification of key times in their calendars. Interactive whiteboards were used in most lessons observed as a means for enhancing the quality of curriculum Religious Education. The Religious Education curriculum is broad and balanced promoting the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and preparing them for the next stage of their education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are satisfactory. Since the last inspection the development of curriculum Religious Education has been impeded as a consequence of the long term absence and changes of subject leader. The headteacher and the present Religious Education co-ordinator are monitoring curriculum Religious Education through lesson observations, learning walks, exercise book and lesson planning scrutinies and a subject audit. The headteacher reports to the governing body on curriculum Religious Education through her termly reports to governors and the subject leader has written a report to be delivered at the next meeting of the Interim Executive Board. The school has a draft strategic plan for Religious Education but the plan needs to be clear and specific in the action to be taken, clearly stating who is responsible for ensuring the planned objectives are achieved, what resources are needed and what the success criteria is. The staff of the school, senior leadership team and governing body all need to be involved in writing and approving a cohesive plan so that the staff and governors have ownership and are accountable. The governors will then be better placed in making informed decisions regarding the evaluation of Religious Education. The school community will have that shared vision for the Catholic life of the school and curriculum Religious Education sought by the reviewed school's Mission Statement which states, 'Our aim at St Margaret Mary's is to work together to put Christ at the heart of every activity.'