

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parish of St Joseph and St Bede, Bury. Pupils with varied socio-economic backgrounds are drawn from the surrounding area of council owned property and areas of terraced rented accommodation. There are currently 43 pupils in the school who live outside the parish. Attainment of pupils on entry to the Nursery is often below average in social and communication skills. The age range of pupils is from 3 to 11 years. The admission number is 60 giving a two-form entry to the school. There are currently 350 pupils on roll of whom 10 are not baptised Catholics. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is 17%. The school has identified 47 pupils as having special educational needs. 7 pupils have a statutory statement of special educational need. There are 15 full time teaching staff all of whom are of the Catholic faith.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Joseph and St Bede is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. The school's Mission Statement is displayed in the main areas of the building. The school's inclusive ethos is a strong foundation for the happy environment in which every member of its community is valued and nurtured. Good relationships between staff and pupils are strengths of the school family as the worth and self esteem of all are encouraged. The spiritual, moral, and social and development of learners is good. The Religious Education curriculum is well planned, monitored and assessed. Resources to support teaching are good. High quality assemblies and classroom worship give good support to the curriculum. The teaching observed during inspection was good. Pupils were well motivated and behaviour was very good. From Foundation Stage to the end of Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress. The headteacher has assessed the leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school and the quality of collective worship to be good. Inspection evidence gathered however indicates the leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school and the quality of collective worship to be outstanding.

Improvement since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the school has undergone a number of changes in staff personnel including the co-ordinator for Religious Education. Reflecting the importance of the role this has been assumed by the headteacher. The Key issues raised in the last Section 23 Inspection have been addressed in full. Systems for the observation of teaching and scrutiny of children's work are in place. Assessment opportunities and activities have been developed and the levelling of pupils' work is in line with the diocesan recommended standards. The governors have appointed two assistant heads to support the headteacher in the leadership and management of the school. These appointments make a positive impact on the strength of the leadership team in supporting the school staff. Governors and parents are well-informed regarding curriculum provision and the progress of pupils.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is comprehensive. The governors and headteacher have a shared vision for the future development of the school. The leadership team is committed to the continuing development of all aspects of the Catholicity of the school. There is good evidence in the effective monitoring of the curriculum and prayer and worship that all members of the school community are fully aware of the goals the school is aiming to achieve. The school has good capacity for further improvement

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop a common format for lesson planning in Religious Education to include the evaluation of teaching.

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 is reflected in all aspects of the daily life and work of the school. The statement is displayed in classrooms and prominent places around the school. The leadership team promote a positive ethos in which staff, governors and parents work together to ensure pupils develop to their full potential in a true Christian environment where all are valued. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school playing an important role in the religious life of the pupils. The governors are well informed and as regular visitors to the school are able to monitor the work of the school as a faith community. Their shared vision for the ongoing development of the Catholic life of the school is reflected in appointments of committed Catholic teachers and the funding for ongoing staff training. The good relationships that exist between the home, school and parish family are a strength, evidenced by the work of the school's active pastoral group within the community. Partnership with parents is further encouraged through newsletters, parent evenings and good information and reporting regarding the progress of their children. Parents are invited to share in school Masses, assemblies and liturgical celebrations. The school maintains good links with the diocesan advisers and the subject leader attends relevant training, feeding back to staff when appropriate. The school plays a leading role in the preparation of pupils for the Sacraments of Initiation.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The provision for collective worship in the school is outstanding. Opportunities for prayer and worship are carefully planned, organised, celebrated and recorded. The rich and meaningful opportunities for worship that were observed during inspection are a regular and integral part of the pupils' prayer life. In all worship the pupils prayed with reverence and respect demonstrating the growing importance of prayer in their daily lives. Each classroom has a focus area for prayer and worship where pupils' individual prayers can be seen on display. A good example of collective worship was a Key Stage 2 assembly on the theme of how we can be more prayerful in Lent. An appropriate modern song entitled "I say a little prayer for you" was the entry music as pupils gathered round a central altar and several images of prayer. After the school prayer pupils suggested the many occasions for prayer during the school day. The teacher recalled the Ash Wednesday service and the promises made by them all to be closer to God through their prayers. Year 4 pupils read the story of Jesus praying to His father in the garden before His death. Focused questions helped the learners to understand that God does not always give us what we ask but rather gives us strength to deal with difficult situations. Some staff told of difficult times when they really had great need to pray. Images of prayer were presented by Year 5 as pupils recognised we often pray using images, song and quiet reflection. After bidding prayers presented by the pupils the assembly concluded with the hymn "Come back to me" beautifully sung and accompanied by guitar, strings and wind instruments. The pupils took away their mission for the day that was to talk to and, more importantly, to listen to God that day.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good. The level of attainment when pupils enter the Nursery is often below average in social and communication skills but progress and achievement in Foundation Stage is good. In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 progress is also good. By the end of both Key Stages standards are in line with those expected in the diocesan programme of work. In all lessons observed learners were able to build on their prior knowledge and attainment. They were attentive listeners, responded well to questioning and participated in lively discussions. Staff set activities according to pupils' age and ability and used support staff well to help learners achieve at an appropriate level. By the end of Key Stage 1 learners are beginning to write short sentences of independent work. In Key Stage 2 the oral work in discussions is good and independent writing continues to develop as pupils record their work in a variety of forms. However in some instances the presentation of work lacks accuracy and a good style of handwriting. In Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 pupils have a sense of wonder at God's creation, know that God loves them and they are special to Him. As they move through Key Stage 2 learners have a growing awareness of the beliefs and values of their faith and are able to relate them to their own life experiences. They show increasing concern for the needs of others and give generously to a number of local and world-wide charities.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning overall is good with some outstanding features in Foundation and both key stages. Evidence that teachers of parallel classes plan their lessons together ensures that learners across each year group have equal access to the religious curriculum. Teachers use a range of techniques and resources to encourage and support pupil learning and meet the needs of all learners. Good use of white boards and information communication technology creates interest and enjoyment in the classroom. The high expectations of all teachers and the effective use of support staff have a positive impact on the behaviour of the pupils. This good classroom management, using praise and encouragement is a strong feature of teaching to which pupils respond with enthusiasm. They achieve well. Lesson plans identify clear learning objectives and teaching strategies but as yet do not include any evaluation of teaching or pupils' achievement. The school should address this by considering a common format for planning. Half termly assessment tasks are completed and the levelling of pupils' work is developing. All teaching areas are bright stimulating learning environments with colourful displays of pupils' work. A good example of teaching occurred in Reception. Pupils had heard the story of Jesus choosing His followers as the teacher introduced the word "disciples" A simple version of the happy occasion when Jesus rode in triumph into Jerusalem was read. The young pupils in costumes acted out this story with enthusiasm waving their palms and shouting Hosanna. Using a word bank learners wrote a few independent sentences or completed a cloze passage telling the story of Palm Sunday.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The curriculum for Religious Education is good. Time allocated to religious lessons is in line with national and diocesan requirements. Joint year group planning ensures that staff support each other and learners in both classes receive equal coverage of their Religious Education entitlement. Teachers are knowledgeable and confident in the consistency of their delivery of *REvision 2000*. Timetabling of lessons ensures quality time is allowed to enable pupils to produce work of a good standard. Teaching assistants play an important role supporting teachers and pupils within the classroom. Good resources including information communication technology give valuable support to the delivery of the curriculum. School Masses together with assemblies and liturgical celebrations have a positive impact in supporting, enriching and extending the Religious Education curriculum at the school. The school plays a leading role in the preparation of pupils for the Sacramental Programme

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are good. Working closely together the headteacher, the chair of governors and the parish priest share a vision for the on-going development of curriculum Religious Education as a priority affecting the life and work of the school. They are considering ways of how the monitoring role of the governing body can be formalised. The headteacher's reports to governors ensure that they are well informed of Religious Education matters. The leadership team work hard to ensure that progress and the development of the curriculum are frequently reviewed. Aiming to support the staff and further raise standards the monitoring of teaching and learning through observations has been put in place. Scrutiny of planning and learners' workbooks is also part of this monitoring procedure. Assessment procedures are in place and help to give a clear indication of pupils' knowledge and understanding. In-service training encourages all staff to challenge their own practice and be adventurous and creative in their delivery of the curriculum. Governors are encouraged to visit the school for occasions of prayer and worship. The parish priest is a welcome visitor in school and plays an active role in the religious life of the school community.