

**SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT**



**ST. OSWALD'S
ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Accrington, Lancashire**

Inspection date February 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	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Rev. Fr. P. Bourke
Headteacher	Mrs. M. Rushton
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Miss K. Bishop
Date of previous inspection	April 2001

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	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	2	
The quality of Collective Worship	2	
Achievement and standards in Religious Education	3	
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 Oswald's is a lower than average-sized Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school with a 26 place nursery in the Diocese of Salford. As a result of 'Faith in the Future' parish re-organisation, St Oswald's is one of three Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary schools serving the parish of St Mary in an area of below average social and economic circumstances in Accrington. About two thirds of the pupils are of white British heritage. A third of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and about half of these pupils speak English as an additional language. The age range of pupils is from 3-11. The indicative admission number is 17 and there are presently 143 pupils on roll including 52 part time nursery pupils. 66 children (46%) are baptised Catholics. 42% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals and 39 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs with 1 child having a statutory statement of special educational need. 4 out of 8 teachers (50%) are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Oswald's is a good Catholic school in which the headteacher gives a strong lead. The governing body is developing effective support strategies to further improve the good practice which is already evident in the school. 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 is good overall with some outstanding teaching observed during the inspection. The Religious Education curriculum is well planned and further enhanced by the provision for prayer and worship and the quality of relationships. The links between the school and the parish are strengthened by the supportive work of the parish priest and the governor with responsibility for Religious Education. She supports both the school and the parish through her work with the parish Sacramental Programme. There are strong links between home and school but the links between home and parish are limited by the pupils' different cultural backgrounds. The headteacher in consultation with her staff has accurately evaluated the school.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 23 inspection in April 2001 the school has reviewed its Religious Education policy seeking to incorporate the Salford diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education. The school has also reviewed its prayer and worship policy.

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to improve is very good because the head, staff and governors of the school have a shared vision of where they want their school to be. The governing body is in the process of establishing a monitoring committee as a means of providing sound backup to the school's improving position and taking a proactive role in monitoring its success. Areas for further development in both Religious Education and collective worship have been identified and strategies to bring about improvements put in place.

What the school should do to improve further

- Evaluate the outcomes of the recently implemented programme for monitoring teaching and learning in curriculum Religious Education as a means of raising standards.
- Monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the Salford diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education implemented by the school from the autumn term 2006.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good with some outstanding features. The parish priest, who is also the chair of governors, headteacher, staff and governing body share the same commitment to the consistent and effective promotion of the Catholic life of the school. Together they have prepared and implemented the School Improvement Plan in which the development of Religious Education takes a prominent place. The headteacher and Religious Education co-ordinator have been set objectives linked to enhancing the Catholic life of the school as part of the school's performance management programme. The governors are in the process of establishing a monitoring and evaluation committee as a means of actively supporting, encouraging and challenging all staff to lead, develop and promote both Religious Education and the Catholicity of the school. Both the Religious Education and prayer and worship policies have been recently reviewed to meet the needs of the school. An effective system to monitor and evaluate Religious Education and collective worship has been implemented but is still at an early stage and is to be further developed. The children are given a voice in the school through the elected school council. During the inspection the school council was able to illustrate how well the members of the school community relate to one another and how the school helps others through its charity work.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is good. Every week there is a whole school assembly led by the headteacher or the assistant headteacher, an awards assembly led by the headteacher, to which parents are invited, a Foundation and Key Stage 1 assembly and a Key Stage 2 assembly led by teachers on a rota basis. During the course of the year each class leads an assembly to which parents are invited. Parents attending class assemblies are invited to enjoy refreshments afterwards and visit classes where lessons are being taught '*to see the school in action*'. The parish priest celebrates Mass in school each term and on special occasions. He also leads non-Eucharistic celebrations linked to the liturgical year as well as contributing to curriculum Religious Education. During the inspection the parish priest led a reflective non-Eucharistic service for Ash Wednesday based on the children's written Lenten promises which had been placed on the altar. Throughout the service the children were reverent and respectful. The children gave the same reverent response during the Shrove Tuesday assembly based on the season of Lent and led by the headteacher. Each classroom has a well positioned and thoughtfully presented focus for prayer, often with a display of the children's work in curriculum Religious Education in close proximity. Prayer and worship and curriculum Religious Education complement each other in the life of the school.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education have been evaluated as satisfactory by the school. While the inspector agrees with this evaluation there is much evidence to show that the staff of the school, led by headteacher and Religious Education co-ordinator, are working hard to raise achievement and standards in Religious Education. At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have a basic understanding of the Catholic and Christian traditions. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have a growing knowledge and understanding of Catholic, Christian and world faith traditions. Scrutiny of the children's work, teacher planning and completed assessment tasks show 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 staff have high expectations of pupil achievement and standards as exemplified during a Year 5/6 lesson about '*God's promise to his people*'. The independent tasks set for the children to complete during the lesson were both challenging and differentiated according to the age and ability of the children. The children in this class are being taught to evaluate their own work in Religious Education by completing 'success criteria' judgements as part of a set task. This method of self evaluation is being encouraged throughout Key Stage 2.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good overall with some outstanding features. All teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge both in their planning and their lessons. Lessons observed during inspection were at least good with some lessons being outstanding or containing outstanding features. All classes are made up of mixed aged groups and teachers plan accordingly using a two year planning cycle in Key Stage 2. During a Year 3/4 lesson the teacher illustrated and explained the Seder Meal and its symbolism by providing part of the meal for the children to taste. The teacher set three clear learning objectives with a distinct reinforcement task to match each learning objective and the age and ability of the children in the class. 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 to help inspire the children as exemplified by a video clip of a baby's baptism used in a lesson for a Reception and Year 1 class. The children in both key stages displayed a good attitude to learning, listened attentively to their teachers and showed respect for each other. They concentrated well when working. Marking of pupils' work is carried out regularly and praises good work. Where the marking is at its best is where teachers write thought provoking questions or inform pupils *'about aspects of their progress in order to support learning and give learners a clear idea of how to improve'*. This is in line with the school's policy on assessment of attainment in Religious Education. The school has recently implemented a programme for monitoring teaching and learning in curriculum Religious Education as a means of raising standards. The inspector encourages the school to monitor this programme and to evaluate its outcomes.

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 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. 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 combine effectively together to ensure that both knowledge and understanding and spiritual development are promoted to the full. The study of other cultures and faiths has been enhanced by the purchase of relevant resource books and artefacts while following the Salford Diocese scheme *'World Religions and People of Other Faiths'*.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school has evaluated leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education as good and while the inspector agrees with this overall there are some outstanding features. The parish priest supports and encourages the headteacher in promoting the school's Mission Statement and their shared vision of what a Catholic school serving different cultures and faiths should be. The governors' recently formed monitoring and evaluating committee, of which the Religious Education governor is a member, is at an early stage in its development but illustrates how the governing body are becoming more proactive in their leadership of all aspects of the curriculum. The Religious Education governor regularly meets with the Religious Education co-ordinator to discuss Religious Education issues and assists with the Sacramental Programme. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher is augmented in curriculum Religious Education by the school's committed and enthusiastic 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. The inspector encourages the staff to continue to implement these guidelines and to monitor and evaluate the outcomes. The headteacher has accurately evaluated Religious Education in her school, identified how it can be made even better and put structures in place to do so.