

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST MARY'S
 ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
 Mayfield Avenue Oswaldtwistle Lancashire BB5 3AA**

Inspection date March 2010
 Reporting Inspector Mr. J. Brierley
 Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Catholic Primary
 URN 119660
 Age range of pupils 4-11
 Number on roll 250
 Appropriate authority The governing body
 Chair of Governors Mr. D. Joyce
 Headteacher Mr. S. Wells
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Mr. S. Wells
 Date of previous inspection November 2006

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	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	3	
<i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i>		

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Mary's is an average sized voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parish of St. Mary in Oswaldtwistle. The school borders on an area of high deprivation. Pupils come from a variety of social backgrounds with a proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. In recent years pupils from Poland and Kerala, a Catholic district of India, have joined the school. Indicators suggest that the children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills generally lower than the national expectation for the age group. The age range of pupils is from 4 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 38. There are currently 250 pupils on roll. 202 of the pupils are baptised Catholics. 29 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs with 6 children having a statutory statement of special educational need. 12% of the children are entitled to free school meals. All 10 teachers (100%) are of the Catholic faith.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a good Catholic school. The experienced and dedicated headteacher provides strong leadership. He is encouraged and supported in his work by the governing body and staff of the school to further develop the good practice already evident in the school. Its Catholic life is a strength of the school producing a warm, welcoming and caring environment in which all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are of a high standard. Pupils are happy, well-behaved, polite and friendly. They display a good attitude to learning and enjoy coming to school where they feel safe, secure and valued by the staff. This is engendered by the exemplary relationships which exist between all members of the school community. Staff are good role models and teaching is good overall. Pupils' achievement in Religious Education has generally reached a good standard by the time they reach Year 6. Religious Education is planned using the Salford Diocese syllabus and supplemented by other Religious Education schemes and resources. The links between the school and the parish are strengthened by the committed work of the parish priest who actively ensures that the school is a valued part of the parish and is regularly featured in the parish magazine. The school supports a number of local, national and international charities while providing a wide range of extracurricular activities for the pupils. The school has achieved the Eco Green Flag International Award, Healthy Schools Award, Heart Start Award and Sports Award.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 48 inspection in November 2006 the school has improved its monitoring of lessons, class liturgies and collective worship. The diocesan scheme for assessment is being used. Pupils' assessed work is levelled and samples are placed in a portfolio as an aid to assessing future pupil work. The monitoring of Religious Education has been improved since the last inspection but more rigour is still required.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the school leadership is aware of where improvements to the delivery of Religious Education are required. Recent changes on the governing body have seen the early introduction of planned strategies to help the school leadership and governors monitor and evaluate Religious Education more fully. The capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the role of governors in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school.
- Continue to establish the diocesan scheme for assessment by setting up a pupil tracking system to record pupils' levelled assessments in Religious Education so that progress can be effectively monitored.
- Continue to establish the monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education as a regular feature on the school's monitoring programme as a means of raising standards and bringing consistency to teaching and learning through the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good with outstanding features. The governing body is actively involved in helping the headteacher and senior leadership of the school to lead the Catholic life of the school through their attendance at Mass, assemblies and school concerts. The school leadership team and staff are effective in promoting this. In September 2008 twenty six members of staff went on a four day residential visit to Rome to reinforce their team role in developing this area of the school's life. The governing body governs the school effectively through its committee structure. Recent changes to the governing body have placed the governors in a strong position to develop their role in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school more rigorously. Strong links between the school, home and church are fostered by the dedicated work of the parish priest, the parish representative and catechist and the staff of the school. The parish priest is a frequent visitor to the school and celebrates Mass in school every second week as a means of ensuring that children know they are part of the parish. The children know their priest and he knows them. Community cohesion is an important feature of the work of both parish and school. The school's community cohesion statement states, 'St Mary's is fully committed to taking a full and active role in participating and being involved in any such activities which will help to promote and enhance community cohesion'. The school has an elected pupil ECO committee which serves to give the children a voice in the school

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is good with outstanding features. A programme of Masses, as well as Masses to celebrate special occasions, is carefully planned in collaboration with the parish priest. These Masses which are celebrated in school are attended by the children, parents and parishioners. The Mass witnessed during the inspection was exemplary. The carefully selected readings, hymns and offerings in the offertory procession all served to focus on the theme of 'Forgiveness'. The priest ensured that the Mass was child centred and the children responded by fully participating through their joyous and enthusiastic singing and responses, their readings, offertory procession and altar serving. The headteacher leads a whole school assembly every Monday based on the liturgical calendar. Whole school prayer and worship is led by the head and deputy each Wednesday. On Thursdays there is a Key Stage 1 class presentation assembly. On Friday there is a class led assembly for both key stages to which parents are invited and at which successes are celebrated. Assembly themes take into account other faiths and cultures. During agreed seasons of the liturgical year the three primary schools within the parish take it in turn to prepare the liturgy for the weekend Masses in church. The children are encouraged to attend the children's liturgy celebrated during Mass in church at weekends. The Sacramental Programme is prepared and taught in both school and church with the support of the parish priest and parish catechist who is a frequent and welcome visitor to the school. The children are encouraged to attend Mass each weekend. A focus for prayer is present in each classroom.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good. Indicators suggest that on starting school the majority of the children's attainment is generally below the national expectation for the age group. By the time the children reach Year 6 they have achieved a good understanding of their faith. This is greatly aided by the Catholic life of the school which envelopes the pupils. Since the last inspection the school monitors pupils through the completion of Religious Education assessments each 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 established through the school in order to bring about a consistency of approach and the establishment of a clear policy for monitoring and evaluating pupil progress and achievement in Religious Education. The scrutiny of exercise books during the inspection showed that differentiation in children's work is mainly by outcome or the provision of additional teaching support. Teachers need to provide a more consistent challenge to pupils, especially those of a higher ability, as a key to raising levels of achievement. The use of assessment for learning in Religious education has been implemented at the school but now needs to move to the next stage in order to effectively monitor individual pupil progress. The school is encouraged to further establish the diocesan scheme for assessment by setting up a pupil tracking system to record pupils' levelled assessments in Religious Education so that progress can be effectively monitored.

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 and teachers consistently demonstrated good subject knowledge. Lessons are based on the diocesan programme of study for Religious Education and teachers use both medium term plans and short term planning, although the use of the latter lacks consistency through the school. Learning objectives are identified in some short term lesson plans. The standard of marking is inconsistent through the school and although it is completed regularly by teachers and often recognises and praises good work it does not always match the school's marking policy's which is, 'to ensure that all children have their work marked in such a way that it is likely to improve learning'. The school is encouraged to continue to establish the monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education as a regular feature of its monitoring programme as a means of raising standards and bringing consistency to teaching and learning through the school. During the inspection there was good evidence to show that where children are challenged they respond well. A Year 6 lesson asked children to consider 'how doing the right thing can make God, others and us happy'. During the lesson the teacher asked probing and differentiated questions in order to stimulate pupil interest, keep pupils engaged and produce well thought out answers. During all lessons the children were well behaved and attentive displaying the very good relationships which exist in the school.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is good. The significance of curriculum Religious Education in the school is clearly visible through displays and the presence of religious artefacts and a focal point for prayer in every classroom. Religious Education is given 10% of curriculum time. The school uses the Salford diocesan Religious Education scheme which is supplemented by reference to supportive schemes of work and an annual cycle of religious activities that further stimulate children's knowledge and understanding of their religion and its traditions. The school has enhanced its Religious Education curriculum through its approach to teaching about other faiths and cultures. The requisition of a range of large colourful books about world religions adds support to the school's policy statement on community cohesion. The school is a signatory to the Hyndburn Schools Race Relations Policy. Regular inclusion of Religious Education on staff and governors' meetings agendas ensures that its profile within the school remains high and that the Religious Education curriculum is regularly reviewed and developed. Evidence of children's work from Religious Education lessons is on display in classrooms and shared areas. The school's Religious Education curriculum is further enhanced by its support and work on behalf of Fairtrade and charities which include HCPT, CAFOD, St Joseph's Penny and Mary's Meals. Through these activities children learn the gospel values associated with helping others.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are satisfactory with good features. The hard working and conscientious headteacher, who is also the Religious Education co-ordinator, is aware of the major strengths and areas for development, including the performance of different groups of pupils and the factors influencing outcomes. The governing body see Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school as a priority for the school and set headteacher performance management objectives based on this area of school life. The newly appointed nominated governor for Religious Education is bringing a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the role and is in a position to give the support and encouragement needed to help the governing body further monitor and evaluate Religious Education in the school. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school and through his work ensures that the school is an important part of the parish and discusses the Catholic life of the school with the headteacher. The School Development Plan, ratified by the governing body, has identified three areas for continued development, as an aid to raising standards in Religious Education and continuing to improve resources. All members of the school's teaching staff are Catholics and are knowledgeable about their faith and its traditions. As a parent observed the school is at the heart of the parish. Through its daily work the school consistently reminds the children that - 'You are a child of God – you are special' - in line with the school's children's Mission Statement.