

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Our Lady of Perpetual Succour is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford situated in the Higher Croft ward of Blackburn which is the fourth poorest borough in the country in terms of multiple deprivation. It serves the parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour and the church is adjacent to the school. A number of pupils have recently been integrated from a nearby school which has closed. A higher than average proportion of pupils leave or enter the school part way through their education. The majority of pupils live in rented council property on the neighbouring housing estates which are in an area of great social disadvantage. The age range of pupils is from 4 to 11 and the indicative admission number is 30. There are 152 children on roll of whom 106 are baptised Catholics. 72% of pupils come from the lowest 10% of most deprived families and 36% from the lowest 5%. 45.8% of the children are known to be eligible for free school meals and 43 children have been identified as having special educational needs. 2 learners have a statutory statement of special educational need. All 6 (100%) full-time and 3 of the 4 (75%) part-time teachers are Catholics. 3 hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or equivalent and 3 are studying for the certificate.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Our Lady of Perpetual Succour is a good school with some outstanding features. It has a strong Catholic ethos. Leadership and management ensure a warm, caring environment in which all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. The Religious Education curriculum is well planned and further enhanced by the provision for prayer and worship, the quality of relationships and the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are well supported by the good deployment of non-teaching assistants, administrative staff and site manager. All staff are positive role models for pupils and are dedicated, committed and hardworking. They strive to help the school grow and develop, coping well with the recent integration of pupils from a nearby school. Learners' behaviour is outstanding. They are mannerly, polite and friendly showing good attitudes to their learning. They respond well to the quality of teaching they experience. Pupils, including gifted and talented and those children with special educational needs, achieve well as a result of the differentiated Religious Education curriculum which meets the needs of all children.

Improvement since the last inspection

There were no key issues arising from the last Section 23 inspection in November 2001. However the school had committed itself to ensuring the development of prayer and worship, the development of the strategies for assessment, recording and reporting in curriculum Religious Education and the provision of opportunities to develop a greater awareness and sensitivity to other faiths. These commitments have been undertaken following advice from the diocesan advisors and the use of diocesan recommended schemes of work. An active parents' forum has been established.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is thorough, objective and realistic. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and she is aware of the school's future needs and development. She is strongly supported by the parish priest, who is the chair of governors, an active and knowledgeable governing body and a hardworking staff. There is a genuine commitment to ensuring that all involved in the school community recognise the important role they play in its future development. The school's capacity to improve is therefore good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Complete the review of the school's Mission Statement, taking into account the views of staff, governors, parents and pupils, as soon as possible.

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 which was last reviewed up in 2002 permeates all aspects of the school's life and is prominently displayed throughout the school. The school is encouraged to complete the planned review of the Mission Statement taking into account the views of all stakeholders. The success of the school is due chiefly to the strong leadership of the hardworking headteacher, the dedicated leadership team and the wholehearted support of the staff who are committed to the Catholicity of the school. Governors are supportive and are involved in shaping the life and direction of the school. A shared vision for the ongoing development of the school as a Catholic community is reflected in governor appointments of committed Catholic teachers to the staff. The parish priest, who is the chair of governors, is well known to the pupils and very knowledgeable in the matter of curriculum Religious Education and the school's life of prayer and worship. He is a daily visitor to the school meeting with the headteacher, who is the co-coordinator for Religious Education, and visiting classes. Governors are informed of all matters relating to the Religious Education in the headteacher's termly written report and by regular visits to the school. There is a designated governor for Religious Education.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is good in frequency and quality. Whole school Masses are celebrated in church weekly. They are planned and led by different classes in order that all pupils are given the opportunity to participate. Each class on a rota basis undertakes assemblies which are a regular feature of school life. The older pupils from Years 5 and 6 prepare their own readings, prayers and other aspects including drama and music. Teachers plan the class assemblies for younger learners taking into account the children's views and ideas. The assembly during the inspection was headteacher led and, as is customary to the school, based on the following Sunday's gospel reading. During this assembly pupils participated fully by acting out the story of "The Widow's Mite". Class worship in Reception and Year 1 took the form of pupils sitting in a circle whilst quietly thinking then verbalising how they could speak to God. They were reminded that they belong to the family of God as well as their family at home. During both the assembly and the class worship pupils were given the opportunity to meditate to quiet music and recite their own bidding prayers. There is a weekly lunch-time inspirational prayer meeting which was well attended during the inspection. At all times pupils showed respect and reverence when singing hymns, praying together and listening to other children's prayers.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good. Children's prior learning and religious knowledge are generally lower than usual when they enter the Reception class. By the end of Key Stage 2 there are clear indicators of good progress. The introduction of effective strategies and systems have ensured that this key aspect of the school's life and curriculum have been prioritised in order that good standards be achieved and maintained. There is a clear scheme of work together with a wide range of resources. Thorough planning identifies focused objectives and outcomes and highlights appropriate differentiation. During lessons observed pupils were provided with opportunities to debate, question and express themselves in their written work, orally and through art and information technology. Children enjoy the subject and take pride in their work. Across the whole school community there is a feeling of self-worth and self-esteem. This has been enhanced by the introduction of the school council and play leaders. Learners are increasingly aware of God's presence in their lives and of His love and forgiveness. Their awareness of the needs of others is evidenced by their generosity to a number of local and worldwide charities.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school has assessed the quality of teaching and learning as satisfactory. Inspection evidence gathered judges this to be good. Teachers have high expectations for themselves and their learners and work hard using a variety of interactive teaching strategies. They demonstrate good subject knowledge of curriculum Religious Education and make good use of the diocesan *Revision 2000* guidelines. Detailed planning with clearly stated objectives leads to lessons incorporating a wide range of activities. There is effective use of resources including information technology. Appropriate differentiation is identified and assessment provides for the less able child and the high achiever. Well-informed teaching assistants are very well deployed and enhance learners' progress. The schools' marking policy is consistently applied. Classroom management and organisation are very good. Behaviour is outstanding throughout the school with pupils co-operating when working with others or independently. They listen intently, respond to questions and use appropriate religious vocabulary. They show an interest in their work and an eagerness to learn. This was evident in all classes but particularly so in upper Key Stage 2 when, during an outstanding lesson with the objective "How we respond to God's presence in our lives through prayer", the teacher introduced a governor who is also a parishioner and Eucharistic minister.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The Religious Education curriculum is good. Religious Education has a high profile in the school and is a key element of the school improvement and spending plans. The Salford diocesan guidelines *Revision 2000* are followed and supplemented by activities relating to the liturgical year and a range of other resources and experiences. The curriculum is further advanced through numerous extra-curricular activities including residential visits to Boreaton Park, Shrewsbury and France. Diocesan guidelines on other world faiths are also a feature of the provision. Teachers' planning is thorough and together with pupils' learning is closely monitored by the headteacher through scrutiny and observation. Appropriate feedback is given and acted upon by individuals and whole staff to ensure good quality teaching and learning. Termly reports to the governors include a significant Religious Education element and are discussed fully. These processes help ensure that curriculum Religious Education is regularly and critically appraised, reviewed and improved.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school has assessed the leadership and management of the school as good. Inspection evidence gathered judges this to be outstanding. The headteacher who is also the co-ordinator for Religious Education has excellent knowledge of her subject and is well placed to advise and support her motivated staff and governors. She has a clear vision of her role within the school and provides strong leadership and direction. The rigorous and regular monitoring procedures provide her with a clear insight into standards, strengths and areas for development. She leads by example and keeps good records. The headteacher's own devised scheme of work for prayer and worship which follows the Church's liturgical year in great detail is outstanding. She appreciates and promotes the way in which Religious Education should pervade the whole school and fully involves the stakeholders at all levels of decision making. Governors are kept fully informed of developments in curriculum Religious Education and prayer and worship by written and verbal reports from the headteacher, parish priest, link governor and curriculum committee. These are supported by their visits to the school and by attending various celebrations and functions. They are seen as critical friends who hold the school to account for its performance. Their input is valued. Resources for Religious Education and worship are plentiful. Attractive displays throughout the premises reflect the faith life of Our Lady's school where Religious Education and prayer and worship have a high profile. The school plays a supportive role in the preparation of pupils for the Sacramental Programme liaising well with the parish leader who is also a governor of the school.