

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Michael and St. John is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parish of St. Michael and St. John in Clitheroe. Some learners come from the surrounding villages. The school is situated next to the church and the trusteeship of the premises and grounds rests with the order of the Society of Jesus. Housing ranges from privately owned detached, semi-detached and terraced properties to local authority housing. There is a rich and diverse social mix of learners whose ages range from 4 to 11 years. The admission number is 30. There are 205 pupils on role of whom 204 are baptised Catholics. 2% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. 25 have been identified as having special educational needs and 5 have a statutory statement of special educational need. The school also receives enhanced school action plus funding for a further 2. 10 of the 12 teachers (83%) are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

The overall effectiveness of the school is outstanding. It is a very welcoming, happy and caring school with life clearly based on Gospel values as embodied in its Mission Statement. It provides a very clean, stimulating and orderly environment in which each individual is respected, cared for and loved and in which the talents of all are nurtured. All staff work well as a team and are very good role models. They are dedicated, committed and hard working, striving to maintain high standards so that the school grows and develops. The strong Catholic ethos pervades all aspects of school life and ensures outstanding provision for the pupils' spiritual and moral development. The headteacher is well supported by the governors, the parish priest and the staff. He displays dedication and exemplary leadership. Relationships in the school are very positive and the provision for Religious Education and prayer and worship is outstanding

Improvement since the last inspection

The key issues arising from the last Section 23 inspection in 2002 have been fully addressed. New assessment systems are in place. Pupils' attainment levels are measured and monitored to aid recording and reporting and to ensure the most suitable curriculum delivery. Outstanding improvement has been made in singing as part of prayer and worship. The provision of recorded music resources has raised its profile considerably and Thursdays' assemblies incorporate hymn practice. The musical ability of the recently appointed deputy head further strengthens this area. Music now plays a key part in all assemblies and liturgies. The school has honoured its commitment to enhance classroom worship. As a result of in-service training and increased resource provision it is now outstanding. Parents are informed of work to be covered in Religious Education each term and work on respecting and understanding other faiths and cultures has been well developed.

Capacity to improve

The headteacher has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and a very clear vision for its further development needs. He is strongly encouraged by the governing body and very well supported by the staff who work hard to achieve the very best possible outcomes for all learners. Thorough self-evaluation, monitoring, assessment and recording arrangements lead to the identification of priorities for school development. Advice from the Salford Diocese, other agencies and cluster group meetings is utilised and opportunities for staff development encouraged. The school's capacity to improve is therefore very good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement identified development plans already agreed.

THE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding and the Catholic faith is firmly at the centre of the school's life. School leaders ensure that the Mission Statement, drawn up by governors and staff, impacts on the whole ethos of the school. Governors are well informed and provide both challenge and support, working effectively in committees and individually. The chair of governors is the link governor for Religious Education. He visits school regularly, works with the headteacher in monitoring progress and feeds back to the governing body. The high quality of the headteacher's leadership, with good support from senior staff and dedicated input from the Religious Education co-ordinator, are major factors in the continuing development of the Catholic life of the school. Most teachers have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or equivalent and two are currently following the course. Priority is given to appointing Catholic members of staff. Excellent systems for self-evaluation and monitoring drive all improvements. Priorities are identified and accompanied by a continuous cycle of planning, action and review. Governors have a significant influence in this. Relationships throughout the school are outstanding. Learners are encouraged to exercise responsibilities as school counsellors, playground pals or monitors. Home-school links are very good and the school ensures close parish links with much support for the Sacramental Programme. Links with other Catholic schools in the areas and with the associated high school are very successful.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The quality of collective worship is outstanding. It follows the school policy and aims, "to provide pupils with opportunities for quality religious and spiritual experiences in a variety of forms". The school is committed to helping staff, pupils and parents to develop a personal relationship with God through prayer and worship. The Religious Education co-ordinator draws up a programme of weekly assemblies for the year. The headteacher leads Monday's assembly setting the theme for the week usually related to the liturgy or a topical event. Friday's assembly includes celebration and awards. A senior staff member leads weekly key stage assemblies. Classes in turn lead an assembly each term. All assemblies are well planned and recorded. They are of a high standard and involve learners in preparation and presentation. In the one observed during inspection learners focused on the feast of Corpus Christi and the importance of its meaning. Creative use of music and visual images increased understanding. Extended worship time observed was thought provoking with pupils reverent and respectful. All classes pray at regular times daily. There are meaningful focal points for prayer in each classroom and around school. Learners are encouraged to explore various methods of private, meditative, group and traditional prayer and to sing hymns. Dance, drama, music and sensory stimuli are also used and sometimes incorporated into class Masses. Pupils are involved in preparing readings and prayer for whole school Masses on special occasions and Sunday family masses. Example set by staff and governors and their obvious faith encourage respect in the pupils and support their spiritual and moral development. Many parents share celebrations, presentations and assemblies. The Religious Education co-ordinator offers support and advice to staff and ensures that quality resources are available.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good with some outstanding features. Assessment and the recording of individual learner's ability and progress are enabling appropriate targets to be set. The school's system for monitoring and evaluation confirms that many learners exceed the expected level of attainment by the end of each key stage and that high standards are achieved. Learners co-operate and respond intelligently in a capable, mature way. They were seen to enjoy their lessons, during inspection, especially when appropriate and challenging tasks were set. The excellent input by teaching assistants ensures good progress for differing abilities. The well-organised and stimulating environment gives Reception children an excellent, challenging start to school life and learning. Their responses, enthusiasm and joy in circle time built around "I am special" were quite contagious. All learners know and understand the Catholic beliefs, values and way of life. They are able to relate this to their own lives in following Jesus' example and making appropriate choices. They know about and respect other faiths and cultures and many experiences are created to facilitate this. Knowledge of the bible is good. The outstanding behaviour is achieved through respect, sharing, reconciliation and the belief that every child matters. Learners confidently share thoughts, use research skills and discuss ideas using appropriate vocabulary. Through prayer, good works and fund-raising they show care for others in need both in school and beyond.

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 in all key stages. Teachers have a secure knowledge of REvision 2000 and detailed records are kept for

individual pupils. Use of challenging tasks to deepen learners' knowledge and understanding, and structured input by teaching assistants to accommodate mixed abilities, were observed during inspection. The school has identified the need to develop this strategy further. Constructive marking and oral feedback by teachers helps learners to develop thoughts and ideas. There is good use of quality resources to enhance learning. Interactive white boards are well used and proving to be a valuable aid. Most classroom areas are spacious and they all reflect learners' achievements through themed displays and focal points. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and share their own faith with them. Classroom management and organisation are good with the pupils' behaviour being outstanding. They are co-operative and attentive. It is evident that they enjoy their Religious Education lessons especially when motivated by challenging teaching techniques and opportunities for discussion. They enjoy sharing others' experiences and views and are confident in expressing their own thoughts and ideas. This was very evident in Year 2 when pupils talked about friendship and the example set by Jesus. Year 6 pupils were able to relate well to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Parents are happy with their children's achievements in Religious Education. They are regularly informed of work to be covered and a number help in school. There is an active Parents and Teachers Association.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. True to the school's mission, "the governors, head teacher and staff are committed to the provision of a high quality education based on the teachings of the Catholic faith". The school fully observes national and diocesan guidelines. It follows its comprehensive policy in recognising each child's needs. Example set by staff, the quality of teaching, prayer and worship and curriculum content ensure outstanding spiritual, moral and cultural development. Aims are clear and relate largely to the *REvision 2000* diocesan programme which provides the basis of the teachers' thorough planning. Prayer, worship and liturgy are closely woven into all work in Religious Education. Links with other curriculum areas enrich this provision. Outstanding work led by the Religious Education co-ordinator has resulted in an assessment process which tracks each child's progress in relation to attainment targets. The school recognises that planning can now be appropriately linked to outcomes to ensure that individual needs are met and that progression and continuity will be maintained. The school uses a very good range of quality resources which are listed and catalogued. Interactive white boards are used in every classroom together with information technology and audio-visual aids. These enhance the children's experiences and learning. Work on other faiths and cultures is undertaken throughout the school and links, to include visits, have been forged with outside groups. A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities is offered to pupils to help them to realise their full potential in an environment in which Christ's example and teaching are central.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are outstanding. The headteacher is committed to its importance and quality as central to the school's whole life and ethos. The co-ordinator shares responsibility for Religious Education with him. She is dedicated, enthusiastic and zealously manages the subject ensuring it retains a high profile in all school planning. Her organisational skills have helped raised standards significantly. Following a thorough review process development needs and priorities have been identified resulting in a framework for action involving all staff. A successful programme for the assessment and recording of learners' progress has been introduced. The co-ordinator scrutinises teachers' planning and pupils' work, giving constructive feedback and evaluating resource needs. With the head teacher she provides help and support for staff, attends diocesan courses and cluster meetings and keeps colleagues updated on relevant developments. The headteacher's monitoring role is ongoing with termly lesson observations. His involvement in Religious Education and prayer and worship on a regular basis enables him to give encouragement, praise and constructive feedback to staff. This is very effective in promoting high standards, very good classroom management and teamwork. This work is supported by the active involvement of the chair of governors.