

**SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT**

**ST. MONICA'S
ROMAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL
& SPECIALIST LANGUAGE COLLEGE.**

Bury



Inspection date April 2006

Reporting Inspector Mr. W. Ryan

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-16
Number on roll	1154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Rev. Monsignor J. Allen
Headteacher	Mr. F. McCarron.
Head of Religious Education	Mrs. E. Crutchley
Date of previous inspection	May 2000.

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school	1	
The quality of Collective Worship	1	
Achievement and standards in Religious Education	1	
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	1	
<i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i>		

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Monica's is a co-educational voluntary aided high school for pupils aged 11-16. It provides education for pupils living in the associated parishes of Our Lady of Grace (Prestwich), St. Bernadette (Whitefield), St. Michael (Whitefield), Our Lady of Dolours (Salford) and St. Mary and St. Philip Neri (Radcliffe). Learners come from a broad spectrum of socio-economic backgrounds and travel to the school from a wide area. The admission number is 210 and there are currently 1154 learners on roll of whom 1153 are baptised Catholics. 8.3% of learners are eligible for free school meals. 141 learners have been identified as having special educational needs and of these 13 have a statutory statement of special educational need. The number of Catholic teachers in the school is 51 and this represents 78% of the total teaching staff.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Monica's is an outstanding Catholic school. Catholic ethos and the school Mission are the starting points for its service to the local Catholic community. School procedures and policies all reflect the commitment to enable everyone to "develop their God given talents to the full, while growing in faith through prayer and service". An experienced governing body, energetically led by its chair, is actively involved in all aspects of school life. Particular attention is paid to the school's Catholic foundation. Individual governors link with departments within the school and challenge and support them in their constant drive to raise standards. The dynamism and commitment of the headteacher is evident throughout the school and the importance he attaches to developing the spiritual lives of the learners is evident in the many initiatives he supports and encourages. The senior management team shares the headteacher's drive and its structure confirms the importance which governors place on the Catholic life of the school. The deputy head whose responsibilities include the school's liturgical life makes a significant and valued contribution to the welfare of the learners. Consequently collective worship features prominently. The chaplaincy group, comprised of governors and staff, plans liturgies and through the liturgy group which is comprised of staff and pupils these plans are realised in a meaningful way for the learners. The Religious Education department makes a major contribution to the school's ethos. The head of department and her deputy lead and support school liturgies and encourage the efforts of the young people involved in their presentation. Standards and achievement in curriculum Religious Education are outstanding and the department's progress since the last inspection is worthy of comment. Pastoral care is outstanding and reflects the school Mission to "provide a caring, supportive environment where everyone is of equal worth". Transition arrangements, particularly from Key Stage 3 to 4, are excellent and pupils recognise and value them. Learners' behaviour is excellent and they make significant contributions to the school's work for charity. Parents and pupils greatly value, and are proud of, the school and its achievements.

Improvement since the last inspection

Since the last inspection a new head of Religious Education and second in department have been appointed with clearly defined areas of responsibility and supported by clear direction from the senior management team. Staff development is monitored through the Departmental and School Improvement Plans. Assessment within the department, together with its marking policy, are now in line with whole school arrangements. The Religious Education curriculum at both key stages has been reviewed and is well delivered throughout the department. A wide range of teaching styles exists within the department and teaching is monitored at departmental and senior management levels.

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to evaluate itself and make further improvement is outstanding. Leadership is committed to continue the drive to raise standards of achievement and the school's culture of self-assessment and target setting ensures progress. Monitoring arrangements in all areas of school life are outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase information communication technology facilities in Religious Education to facilitate easier access for, and encourage greater use by, all members of the department.
- Continue to develop the Religious Education department marking policy to maintain the progress made in involving learners in personal target setting.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The school deems the leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school to be outstanding and the inspector supports this judgement. The school mission is the starting point for all initiatives and governors attach the utmost importance to the school's ethos. Governors play a full and active part in developing the spiritual life of the learners. The governing body benefits from a wealth of experience among its members, a well organised structure, active involvement at departmental level and dedicated leadership. Governors are regular visitors to the school and the contribution made by its priest members, through celebrations of Holy Mass, parish assemblies and support for other liturgical events is worthy of mention. The headteacher has an enlightened vision for the school and in this he is ably supported by a dedicated and enthusiastic senior management team. The Catholic ethos of the school is valued at all levels of management and is the foundation on which its excellent pastoral care system is built. Parents and pupils recognise its worth. Through the school's chaplaincy group opportunities for prayer and worship are planned, recorded and monitored. This group draws its membership from all sections of the school community. The input of the Religious Education department in this area is significant and the contribution of individual members of staff through voluntary work with the Pro Life group and Amnesty International should not be underestimated. Learners are aware of the needs of others and the school is rightly proud of their contributions to charity.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The school and the inspector agree that the quality of collective worship is outstanding. The efforts of the chaplaincy group ensure that prayer and worship retain a high profile in the school's everyday life. Planning is excellent and the group's wide-ranging membership leads to ownership by the whole school community. The liturgical life of the Church forms the basis for school worship. Services take place in Advent with special assemblies at Christmas. Lenten services take place after the reception of ashes on Ash Wednesday and preparations are made for Holy Week. In addition a welcome Mass is celebrated for Year 7 pupils and their parents and a Leavers Mass takes place in the summer term. A whole school Mass brings the year to a conclusion. Voluntary Mass is celebrated every fortnight with form groups leading the celebrations. The school's liturgy group which takes its membership from pupils of all year groups plays a major role in leading and planning assemblies and liturgies. School prefects make a major contribution in this area. Form groups prepare voluntary Masses and assemblies and the Religious Education department is actively engaged in providing support in their presentation. Links with parishes are encouraged through parish assemblies and in these a number of priest governors are involved. Pupils pray with respect and reverence daily either at assembly or in forms and the use of the school's prayer booklets encourages variety in prayer styles. School retreats, including last year's Mission, have a major impact of the lives of the whole school community.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspector agrees with the school that achievement and standards in Religious Education are outstanding as examination results at Key Stage 4 indicate. Learners are challenged and respond well. Standards in the department are high and are continuing to rise. This is due in no small measure to excellent leadership and high quality support from senior management. Lesson observation is part of the department's strategy to improve consistency and raise standards. Sound assessment procedures and good quality target setting enable learners to chart improvement and build on success. Learners are engaged in assessing their own work and that of their peers. This is valued by the pupils themselves as they believe it leads to better target setting. The recent change of examination body for Key Stage 4 learners is calculated to improve achievement in Religious Studies and last year's results were well above the national average. The department is working on improving the quality of the syllabus at Key Stage 3 and is building on the assessment procedures already in place. Marking is in line with the school marking policy. Work is well marked across the department and the comments and targets are understood and valued by learners. Learners are well motivated and respond well to their teachers. Pupil- teacher relationships are excellent and lead to good learning. Rewards help to motivate the learners and they respond well to praise and encouragement. Religious Education enjoys a high profile in the school and its significance is acknowledged by both staff and pupils. Members of the department recognise and value the support it receives from the Learning Support Department.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school assesses the quality of teaching and learning to be good. The inspector concurs. The Religious Education department is staffed by well qualified and experienced practitioners. The department is housed in five adjacent rooms allowing for very good communication. Relevant and meaningful display enhances the learning environment and this is used in lessons as a teaching aid. Lessons observed were well planned and followed a school-wide pattern. A variety of teaching styles was observed. Lesson pace was good and a varied range of materials was used to stimulate interest and discussion. The work was tailored to the ability of the learners. Some use was made of information communications technology but more provision is needed in some rooms. Pupils are actively engaged in their own learning and they value the subject. The Department Improvement Plan identifies the target of reviewing its marking policy to ensure its relevance to the learners. This is to be encouraged. Relationships in the classroom are very good with teachers rewarding and supporting learners and with the learners being attentive and treating the teachers with respect. Monitoring and lesson observations both within the department and by senior management take place regularly in order to inform and improve teaching and learning.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The inspector supports the school's judgement that the quality of the Religious Education curriculum is good. At Key Stage 3 the diocesan guidelines are in place and resource materials have been collated to support the delivery of the curriculum. The school has invested in new text books to support the syllabus at Key Stage 3 and the department considers these to be suited to the ability and background of the learners. The school assessment programme is used to good purpose to inform planning and to enable staff to chart progress. A recent review of Key Stage 4 has resulted in a change of syllabus to one more suited to the needs of the learners. This has contributed to the school achieving its best ever results at Key Stage 4 in 2005. The department's aims to build on its achievement with the most able and further develop support for other groups of pupils are laudable. Pupils respond well to the curriculum content. They play an active part in lessons and their good behaviour and respect for teachers further enhance their learning. The school's provision of opportunities for prayer and for raising awareness of the needs of others further enriches the curriculum. The school's specialist Language college status enables it, through exchange visits, to develop its multi-cultural agenda.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school judges the leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education to be good. The inspector considers it to be outstanding. The head of department is an experienced and skilful teacher who enjoys the confidence and support of the governing body and the senior management team. The department is very well organised and its members meet regularly to monitor and assess progress. The department is actively engaged in self-assessment through classroom observation and senior management support. All members of the team are well qualified and introduce a variety of styles of teaching to stimulate and interest the learners. Members of the department make a major contribution to the spiritual life of the school, leading liturgies, supporting colleagues and working with the liturgy group. The link governor attends departmental meetings and other members of staff remark on the quality of its contribution to the school in addition to the remarkable improvements in the department in recent years. Resource materials are made available by the head of department to enhance the presentation of assemblies and worship in the school. Rooming arrangements are very good in terms of number and location. However there is a need to make better information communication technology provision. Display is bright, well presented and relevant. The annual expenditure allocated for the department is at least adequate and compares favourably with other major departments. Funds are also available for in service training.