



## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Our Lady of Lourdes is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes and St Gregory in Farnworth, Bolton. The majority of children live in the parish. The school is located in an area rated in the highest 10% deprivation index. The overall socio-economic context is below average. The learners live in a mix of rented and owner occupied properties and their ages range from 4 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 30 and there are currently 191 learners on roll of whom 172 are baptised Catholics. There are 32 learners whose mother tongue is not English and there is an increasing number who come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. 15 different languages are spoken by the learners and 24% are eligible for free school meals. While 44 learners have been identified as having special educational needs none has a statutory statement of special educational need. 7 of the full time teachers (88%) are Catholics. Plans have been approved for a Nursery Unit to open in April 2008.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

Our Lady of Lourdes is a good school with several outstanding features. It is highly effective in offering its learners a good traditional Catholic education in a happy, supportive and caring environment. It lives out the aims of its Mission Statement that "our children be valued and heard, supported and challenged and be given real opportunities to help in the reshaping of the world". The school is firmly at the heart of the parish it serves and has developed strong links with the local community. Throughout the year learners, parents, staff and parishioners are given many opportunities through excellent assemblies and liturgical celebrations to strengthen their relationship with God. The very successful Sacramental Programme, well supported by the school and parish priest, promotes and fosters very good home, school and parish links. The school is very successful in promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the learners. Their behaviour is excellent and they work hard to achieve the high expectations of the staff. The inspired leadership of the dedicated headteacher, together with the hard work and commitment of the governing body and staff, has ensured the outstanding development of Our Lady's as a successful Catholic school. All have a shared vision for the future of the school.

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

Following the last Section 23 inspection in October 2004 the school has made outstanding progress. Many serious issues were identified. All these issues have been addressed and satisfactorily resolved. The new headteacher was appointed in April 2005 and a deputy was appointed in September 2005. Several new governors were appointed to the governing body. Four newly qualified teachers were appointed in 2006 and another in September 2007. Under the inspired leadership of the headteacher, and with the full support and dedication of governors and staff, Our Lady of Lourdes is a changed school. Several areas of the school have been refurbished and facilities for disabled access have been enhanced. Play equipment has been installed in the playground and soft play for the Foundation Stage learners has been provided. Security fencing has been installed.

### **Capacity to improve**

The school's self-evaluation is honest, detailed and thorough. The headteacher and the whole school community appreciate the need to work as a cohesive team for the future development of the school. The dedication and commitment of the leadership and management team, fully supported by the hardworking staff, ensure that the capacity to improve is outstanding

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Continue to implement fully the diocesan assessment guidelines for Religious Education as identified in the School Improvement Plan.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL**

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good with many outstanding features. The Mission Statement has been renewed and is reviewed regularly. The learners have evaluated it and are actively engaged in translating it into practice for the school. The Mission Statement and its aims permeate all aspects of the life of the school. The effective governing body has established a structure for monitoring and evaluating the school's provision. The designated governor for Religious Education is a frequent visitor to the school and reports her findings to the governing body. The detailed reports from the headteacher ensure that governors are now fully aware of what is happening in school. Governors are involved in leading the successful parish Sacramental Programme initiative, which is fully supported by the headteacher and staff, many of whom worship in the parish. The input of the parish priest in the daily life of the school is acknowledged and appreciated by the whole school community. The newly qualified teachers on the staff are encouraged to attain the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies and several have already begun the course. 4 teachers already have the qualification. The school plays a significant role in the wider community. The increasing number of learners from different cultures has encouraged the school to celebrate the diversity of the learners' background and this has enriched the experiences of all involved in the school.

## **THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

Provision for collective worship has been evaluated by the school as good. The inspector judges it to be outstanding. The school has a clear policy for collective worship. Whole school Masses are held in church on Holy Days and special Feast Days. Key Stage Masses and class Masses are held regularly in school. At all these celebrations learners are fully involved in the planning and take an active role in the readings, music and bidding prayers. They also act as altar servers. Parents, governors and parishioners are invited to make comment in the book used for that purpose and many record their appreciation and admiration for the learners' participation. Throughout the year all members of the school community are invited to develop their relationship with God through the opportunities offered for community prayer, as illustrated by the excellent Year 6 assembly during the inspection. Reflective and personal prayer are also encouraged. The input and support of the parish priest on all these occasions is acknowledged and appreciated by learners, parents and staff. Class collective worship is a strength of the school. The worship attended in Year 5 was an excellent example of learners developing an understanding of spirituality through readings and music. Learners are familiar with the traditional prayers of the church and are happy to share their own spontaneous prayers with others. At all times learners are very respectful and reverent when they pray. Collective worship is planned and incorporated into Religious Education lessons very effectively. Detailed records of assemblies and Masses are kept by the school. All learners are included and involved in collective worship and no learner is withdrawn. The school is not complacent and is continuing to develop the opportunities for collective worship, reflecting the ethnic diversity of its learners.

## **ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education overall are good. Learners enter the school at 4 with attainment broadly in line with national expectations. In writing they are below expectations. Good consistent progress is made within and between all key stages. By the end of the Foundation Stage a few learners are able to record their knowledge. At the end of Key Stage 1 learners are able to record their work in simple sentences and write their own prayers. Their oral knowledge is good and they use good religious vocabulary when discussing their work. They understand their responsibility for caring for all God's creations. Observations in lessons confirm this judgement. In Key Stage 2 progress is maintained. Learners have a good factual knowledge of their faith and several are able to produce well written extended pieces of work explaining their knowledge and their personal ideas. The younger learners understand the Psalms and the oldest learners have an impressive knowledge of Sikhism. They are developing a good sense of responsibility through their involvement in the school council. They give generous support to local, national and international charities.

Behaviour at all times is excellent.

## **THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The inspector agrees with the school that the quality of teaching and learning is good with an example of outstanding teaching observed in Key Stage 1. All lessons observed were carefully planned with a clear focus. The learning objectives were explained to learners and a wide range of teaching styles was used to reflect lesson content and the age and ability of the learners. All lessons are based on the diocesan *REvision 2000* guidelines. Excellent, good quality resources have been purchased to supplement the scheme. These are used effectively to enhance the learning process. Planning is consistent throughout the school and opportunities for collective worship are effectively incorporated into this planning. Teachers and learners use information and communication technology in their lessons. All work is very carefully marked by the teachers. Good work and special effort is acknowledged and suggestions made as to how work could be improved. Assessments based and levelled on the diocesan suggestions have still to be fully implemented. The number of newly qualified teachers in the school has necessitated several sessions of support on this aspect of teaching by the diocesan primary advisers. Work produced in previous years will be used to develop a portfolio of levelled work to help the inexperienced teachers. Learners have good attitudes to their learning. They listen attentively to the teachers input, respect other learners' contributions, respond enthusiastically to the teachers' questions and generate their own to clarify tasks. When given a task to complete they settle down quickly and keep on task until their work is completed. They show a genuine enjoyment in their work co-operating well in pairs and in groups.

## **THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM**

The inspector judges the Religious Education curriculum to be outstanding. The school has a clear, up-to-date policy for Religious Education. All lessons are planned using the *REvision 2000* guidelines supplemented with a range of very good quality resources. The diocesan World Faiths programme has been introduced in Key Stage 2 since the last inspection and makes a valuable contribution to cohesion within the school. The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning project has had a positive effect on the overall provision. On her appointment the headteacher took on the responsibility for Religious Education to emphasise the centrality of this subject in the school and the parish priest plays a supportive role in the Religious Education curriculum through his weekly visits to the classes. No learner is withdrawn from Religious Education lessons. The time allocated to curriculum Religious Education meets both diocesan and national requirements and the length of individual lessons meets both the requirements of the curriculum and the needs of the learners. The school has developed close links between Religious Education and other curriculum areas including Citizenship, Speaking and Listening, Drama and Music. The quality of the planning and delivery of collective worship impacts positively on the Religious Education curriculum. The successful parish organised Sacramental programme and the children's Sunday Liturgy all play an important role in the overall provision for Religious Education at Our Lady of Lourdes school. This provision makes a major contribution to the quality of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the learners.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are outstanding. The headteacher took on the responsibility for Religious Education in April 2005. All the documentation in place dates from this time. A great deal of dedication, hard work and commitment has resulted in the excellent policies and records now available in the school. Detailed monitoring of the curriculum provision is a component part of the reports received by the governing body. The regular monitoring visits by the designated governor for Religious Education are reported at governor meetings ensuring that governors are able to fulfil their role as "critical friends" to the school. The chair of governors and parish priest, as vice chair, are regular visitors to the school. Teachers evaluate their work in Religious Education and identify their future training needs. Resources have been audited, evaluated, supplemented and catalogued. Collective worship resources have also been replenished and all classes have an attractive focal area for prayer. Attractive displays clearly reflect the faith life of the school which now is a vibrant, learning environment. Teachers have regular staff meetings on Religious Education topics. Their continuing professional development includes attending training sessions and meetings with the diocesan advisers. The School Improvement Plan identifies clear, realistic priorities for the future development of Religious Education. Collaborative team work in the school will ensure this shared vision is realised.