



INSPECTION REPORT

School: St Mary's and St Joseph's RC Primary School
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Head teacher: Mrs Andrea Thomson
Chair of Governors: Mrs Susan Rewaj

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Salford
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of Inspection: Monday 9th July 2012
Date of previous inspection 13th October 2008 (OFSTED)
December 2008 by Salford Diocese
Reporting Inspector: Sr Judith Russi SSMN

Information about the school

St Mary's and St Joseph's is an average-sized primary school providing Catholic education in south-east Blackburn within the Audley and Longshaw areas. The school is situated in Holy Family Parish. 20% of pupils are baptised Catholics.

55% of the teaching staff are practising Catholics. 58% of the Support staff are Catholic; four Support staff represent the Muslim community and play an important role in the life of the school.

The Head teacher was appointed in January 2012.

The ethnic diversity, significant levels of unemployment and wide ranging issues resulting from social deprivation present considerable challenges for the school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average.

77% of the pupils are from a range of ethnic groups. 42% are of Indian-heritage, 26% Pakistani-heritage. EAL is 54%, most of whom have very little or no English.

The majority of children have nursery school experience but assessment records show evidence that most of the children are achieving well below average standards on entry to school.

The school has several awards, including Artsmark Gold, Healthy Schools status, Eco-Schools Silver, and Every Child A Reader accreditation. The school provides a breakfast-club each morning.

The school is over-subscribed and every class has a waiting list.

Overall effectiveness

Grade 2

Capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 2

The school has made good progress. The introduction and rapid development of the creative curriculum are actively fostering independent learning to a high level. The introduction of the Team Action Challenge approach is serving to drive standards up and develop a real love and excitement about learning amongst the pupils taking part. The Governing Body and Senior Leadership Team have a clear vision of where they need to go and how to achieve this. The governors are fully supportive. Each class has an attached Governor. This is working to enable all Governors to have a deeper and more effective understanding of the challenges and successes of the school. Governors are confident in their role as critical friends to the school.

The Catholic life of the school permeates every aspect of the learning and relationships within the school and provides the context for the whole learning community. The majority of Religious Education is good with some being outstanding. The school has introduced the new RE programme 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' and is now ready to develop the scheme further by introducing a higher level of creativity, higher order questioning skills and multi-disciplinary assessment challenges.

The school development plan identifies all the issues for development and the leadership team are addressing them effectively.

What the school needs to do to improve.

The leadership team are fully aware that they need to strive for excellences in all areas. In order to achieve this they will:

- Continue to develop the Team Action Challenge approach to teaching and learning in order to raise standards of independent learning in all Key Stages.
- Continue to develop the RE scheme of work so that it is fully integrated into all the children's learning by building on the very good practice of setting innovative and creative assessment challenges at all Key Stages.
- Revisit assessment and marking policies and the setting of individual pupil targets in RE to enable all pupils to understand what they need to do to improve.
- Further develop Chaplaincy throughout the school by developing closer links with the parish and exploring the development of a Lay Chaplaincy team within the school under the leadership of the Parish Priest.

PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups.

Grade 2

In order to verify the judgements made in the SEF one lesson was observed in EYFS, two in KS1 and three in KS2. Pupils clearly enjoyed their learning in RE. Teaching and learning was never less than satisfactory with the majority being good with some outstanding features.

Key Stage 1 pupils had good scriptural background knowledge and were able to recall a range of stories to illustrate the learning objective. Pupils were challenged to develop their language skills and apply their learning to their own experiences. This was greatly helped by the blind folding exercise in Year 1 as one child was invited to take part in a trust test with the teacher. Pupils demonstrated a high level of self control and concentration throughout. The exploration of feelings connected with the story of the Ascension as contrasted with the Pentecost story in Year 2 provided a framework for reflection and application to their lives.

The creative activities enabled all children to participate. Pupil's behaviour was excellent throughout.

The creative curriculum approach to learning was clearly in evidence in Key Stage 2. Pupils worked purposefully in groups throughout. The further integration of the schools creative teaching and learning strategies in the use of the new RE scheme will greatly enhance pupil learning and achievement. The very good level of behaviour for learning enabled pupils to work independently and out of their normal classroom environment. They remained on task and focused throughout. The mixed ability groupings were sensitively and appropriately managed so that all pupils were able to contribute. The Year 4 reflection lesson in the Spiritual Garden demonstrated a sensitive and respectful response to pupil needs for a quiet space in order to reflect on their lives. Pupils clearly appreciated this opportunity to engage with big questions of purpose and meaning or as one pupil remarked 'I just like sitting in peace'.

The teaching and learning in the Year 6 class was outstanding. Pupil's ability to play a full and active part in a mixed ability group as they engaged in a Team Action Challenge was outstanding. The team presentations showed a high level of learning. All pupils contributed to the group presentation, compiling evidence from different sources. Findings were related to scripture and moral values. The pupils were able to work independently at a high level. Teaching continually challenged pupils to think analytically and critically resulting in deep thinking. Throughout all pupils were fully engaged and enjoying the challenge. Behaviour was never less than outstanding.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School

Grade 2

The leadership of RE is good. There are two newly appointed RE coordinators who share the role across the school. The RE coordinators work closely with the Head teacher and Senior Leadership team. Assessment for learning in RE is under review. Teachers across the school are working towards ensuring that the levels of attainment in RE are as high as or higher than other core subjects. The marking policy is also under review to ensure consistency across all key stages and enabling all pupils to recognise their next steps in learning. The introduction of 'excellence criteria' for all classes and personalised targets will assist in the raising of standards. Detailed planning and recording of pupil attainment levels is in place and informing planning.

The Governors, Head teacher and senior leadership team have developed a clear vision for the school which is owned and supported by staff, parents and pupils. The Head teacher and her team, provide a range of expertise to drive school improvement across the board. They are fully aware of the significant challenges ahead but are not daunted by them. There is a palpable enthusiasm for ensuring their children receive the best possible Catholic education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good across all Key Stages. A very high level of social cohesion exists within the school. The diverse nature of the community is a richness offering a strong witness to what a Catholic educating community should be in such a multi-faith environment. The school actively identifies ways in which they can learn from and celebrate other faiths.

Relationships between staff and pupils are warm, joyful and pupils clearly feel valued. In discussion with a group of pupils a Year 6 pupil said *'I feel honoured to be here as I have opportunities that many other children don't have'*. In response to the question 'what makes St Mary's and St Joseph's different, a Year 5 pupil answered, *'Everything we do here we do in the presence of God'* When asked to clarify what he meant, he replied *'God is omnipresent'*.

Relationships with parents and carers are very positive and the school seeks their views. Efforts are being made to increase the role of parents as the first educators in the faith of their children. Homework is being developed further to engage parents and carers in home learning with their children.

The leadership of worship throughout the school is effective and pupils are encouraged to play a full part. Opportunities for quiet reflection are balanced with music, prayers and role play. Training for all staff in this area would further develop the prayer life of the school in line with the developmental needs of pupils in different Key Stages.

The school is proactive in seeking good partnerships with external agencies who can support pupils and families in the greatest need or whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable.

The pupils were able to articulate very clearly that they felt safe and happy in their school. A Year 3 pupil remarked that *'I never want to leave my school. I feel safe. It is my home.'* Safeguarding arrangements are well known and effective.

Mass is celebrated in school. The Parish Priest and Head teacher are aware of the need to continue to develop a high profile within the parish and are keen to actively seek ways together in strengthening this partnership as central to the evangelising mission of the Church.