

## INSPECTION REPORT

School: **St Gabriel's Roman Catholic High School**  
Address: **Bridge Road, Bury BL9 0TZ**  
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e-mail address: **stgabriels@bury.gov.uk**  
URN: **105367**

Headteacher: **Mr E P Robinson**  
Chair of Governors: **Mr J Costello**

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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

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| <b>The Inspection judgements are:</b>      | <b>Grade</b> | <b>Explanation of the Grades</b>                                  |
|--|--------------|---|
| Overall effectiveness of the school        | 1            | 1 = Outstanding<br>2 = Good<br>3 = Satisfactory<br>4 = Inadequate |
| Capacity for sustained improvement         | 1            |   |
| Overall pupils' outcomes                   | 1            |   |
| Leadership and management                  | 1            |   |
| Effective provision for Catholic education | 1            |   |

Date of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> October 2011  
Date of previous inspection: October 2008  
Reporting Inspector: Mrs Margaret Diffley

## **Information about the school**

St Gabriel's Roman Catholic High School and Science College is an average sized Catholic secondary school within Bury Local Authority serving the parishes of St Marie's; St Hilda's, Tottington; Guardian Angels' ; St Joseph's, (which includes the former St Bede's parish) and St Joseph's, Ramsbottom.

There are 1041 pupils on roll of whom 84% are baptised Roman Catholics. Most students are white British but there is an increasing number of Polish pupils entering the school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. 40% of the school's 64 teachers are Catholics.

## **Overall Effectiveness**

**Grade 1**

This is an outstanding Catholic school. St Gabriel's is a praying and worshipping community where prayer is central to the life of the school and where each individual is valued as a 'Child of God.' Under the inspirational leadership of the Headteacher and senior leadership team, there is a strong thread of spirituality which binds this school together, alongside a determination to engender amongst pupils a strong ethos of service to the local and wider community. The commitment shown to the most vulnerable pupils is indicative of the school's concern to live out its' mission to encourage and cherish every individual. The effect is to create a strong sense of community within the school. St Gabriel's is particularly effective in evaluating its own strengths and weaknesses in relation to RE and its Catholic life. The strong, systematic monitoring of teaching and learning, as well as departmental planning are to be commended as models of outstanding practice. The overall quality of school self evaluation is excellent and has been effectively used to establish clear priorities for the development of the school.

All this is underpinned by the quality of the school's prayer and liturgical life. Pupils act with reverence and are keen to participate in the prayer life of the school. They join in traditional prayers appropriately and with confidence, showing good understanding of religious seasons and feasts. A full colour prayer book written ' By pupils for pupils' has been created . Assemblies and other forms of prayer and worship make use of music, art and drama in conjunction with information technology media, all of which enhance the opportunities for engagement and response. Assembly themes are well planned, and relate to the Church's Liturgical Year. Everyone seems at ease when praying with their school community.

## **Capacity for sustained improvement**

**Grade 1**

The community at St Gabriel's has securely maintained and built on previously outstanding performance. The Governors, Senior Leadership Team and other leaders and managers inspire the school community to sustain an ambitious and challenging vision, supported by a culture of high expectations, which is clearly focused on the school's mission. The school has been successful in improving outcomes for pupils through monitoring and evaluation of both its' worship and academic achievements, and through highly skilled teaching of the Roman Catholic faith in relevant and meaningful ways.

Turnover of staff is very low and morale is high, with enthusiasm, a passion for hard work and belief in the school's success connects all levels of staff. Many third generation families are part of this school community. Parents have confidence in the school's ability to educate and support their children's growth into mature young Catholic Christians.

St Gabriel's capacity for sustained improvement in pursuit of excellence in Catholic education is outstanding.

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

1. Develop and extend the role of lay chaplaincy to meet the school's changing needs
  
2. Plan and deliver a programme of renewal for all staff in order to revisit the distinctive mission and ethos of this Roman Catholic school

## **PUPILS**

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

#### **Grade 1**

The extent that pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. As the Headteacher says: "Staff walk through the door with the intention of making a difference. I hope that our students leave St Gabriel's with the determination to make a difference." Pupils understand the mission of this Catholic school and play their part in evaluating its distinctive nature. They lead and take responsibility for shaping activities of a religious character ably supported by the local clergy and school staff. Pupils are proud of their background and beliefs and they have a strong sense of personal worth. In and out of lessons they express their own views and beliefs with confidence. They are able to understand and explain how the teachings of Jesus apply to their own lives. Pupils have a sense of the wider world, other people's beliefs, cultures and needs. They are generous in their support for those less fortunate and suffering from the effect of global disasters e.g. support for Caritas, St Joseph's Penny, by providing food parcels prepared by pupils. The annual coffee morning, a tradition of the school for over 50 years, raises over £2000 for the Bury Uganda Project. Staff from St Gabriel visit Uganda as do former pupils of the school, now at the local Catholic Sixth form college.

Vibrant acts of worship that make connections between faith and daily life engage all pupils' interest and inspire in them response. Prayerful reflections are embedded in learning activities, such as one on 'A life worth living' seen in a year nine lesson. An excellent year group assembly used personal witness to challenge pupils to make a difference to the lives of people in Uganda, giving immediate and practical ways to accomplish this. The "Torch Relay of Prayer" has galvanised pupils and staff with a whole school celebration in the final stages of preparation. Pupils regularly prepare and lead collective worship with confidence and enthusiasm. The Beatitudes group brings pupils of all ages to develop their own liturgy. Pupils are at ease and act with integrity when praying with others who have different beliefs and attitudes to spirituality. Older pupils in particular show a mature understanding of liturgy and are able to make connections between the prayer life of the school and that of the church as a whole.

Pupils of all ages take responsibility for themselves and their actions, demonstrating mutual respect which results in a calm, harmonious and safe environment in which learning takes place. Pupils appreciate that religious beliefs and spiritual values are important for many people in their community. They show interest in the religious life of others as well as care and respect for religious objects around school. They are justifiably proud of their HENE centre and eager to extend its use by individual pupils. Their enjoyment of Religious Education is reflected in high quality behaviour and motivation.

Achievement in Religious Education is outstanding for all groups of pupils, because attainment is consistently high and both learning and progress are outstanding. Pupils apply high levels of thinking skills to their studies showing significant levels of originality and creativity in their understanding and skills within the subject. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress.

## How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

Grade 1

Prayer is fundamental to the life and journey of this school and a key part of every school celebration and gathering. Pupils' liturgical formation is well planned, age appropriate and shows progression. There is a close link with the liturgical life of the Church and themes are responsive to religious diversity among pupils. The reordering of the main hall together with development of Sacred Space in the HENE centre have provided dedicated areas for worship and meditation. Learners are provided with regular opportunities to worship together on a daily and weekly basis.

The school is at the cutting edge of effective curriculum design. The departmental team of reflective practitioners successfully seeks to improve upon the coherence, relevance and excitement of the meticulously planned learning opportunities provided. As a result pupils have the opportunity to be enthusiastic and highly motivated learners and benefit from excellent opportunities to further their spiritual and moral development. The curriculum helps pupils critically reflect on the Catholic faith and the responses it gives to questions of meaning and purpose. This was demonstrated in Year 10 lessons on organ donation and a Year 9 lesson on Euthanasia. Pupils are constantly challenged to think and are consequently able to clearly articulate their own personal response. This was seen in Year 11 lessons on 'design and belief in God' and on how religious experiences lead to belief in God.

Pupils throughout the school achieve well in Religious Education because of outstanding teaching, alongside their own good behaviour and positive attitudes which allow learning to flourish. The RE curriculum is exceptionally well planned, is inclusive and provides opportunities for all pupils to succeed. Within a mutually supportive departmental team, teachers are encouraged to develop their own teaching styles which indicate high levels of confidence and creativity. This is a leading department which disseminates outstanding practice throughout the school.

Self evaluation at all levels is coherent and rigorous. Self challenge is embedded and rigorously focussed assessment strategies provide an up to date picture of the achievement of all pupils. The information is used consistently to sustain high levels of achievement. Using the framework of "My RE Journey" the school sets challenging targets for all pupils; progress towards achieving these is monitored assiduously. Peer and Self Assessment, linked to assessment activities, are used to promote discussion on further improvement.

## **LEADERS AND MANAGERS**

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

**Grade 1**

The school's leadership is deeply committed to the church's mission in education. An effective model of distributed leadership has energised the whole community and there is unequivocal and explicit evidence that the Catholic mission of the school is a clear priority alongside an all pervading dedication to meet the needs all pupils and foster their spiritual and moral development. Pupils and staff have a genuine understanding of the school's mission, share its purpose and live out its principles on a daily basis.

Leadership and management of RE is outstanding. There is a clear focus on the raising of standards through highly effective planning, monitoring and self evaluation. This has had a significant impact on raising achievement across both key stages. The head of department is collaborative and leads by example. She has an empathetic understanding of her colleagues' skills and experience which she puts to good use. The school's accurate and detailed information on pupil achievement is used effectively at both Key Stages to identify and tackle any underachievement. Regular assessment including peer and self assessment ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what needs to be done in order to improve. The RE department sets challenging targets and progress is monitored systematically. There is substantial evidence that outcomes are improving strongly.

Members of the governing body, who bring a broad range of appropriate personal experience and skills, have a vigorous approach to their work and give generously of their time. They have a strong focus on both Catholic ethos and the provision of Religious Education and are well informed about both. The experienced Governors have many years of association with St Gabriel's and are well organised and thorough in discharging their statutory and canonical responsibilities. They are confident in providing high level of challenge for Religious Education and engage effectively with parents, pupils and staff.

The inclusion of all is definitely a central goal and a shared vision at St Gabriel's. Leaders and managers work with outside agencies to ensure that pupils enter into dialogue and collaborate with people from different backgrounds. Within school there is concern, respect, hospitality and a warm welcome for all. Pupils from different backgrounds are given opportunities to work together. Relationships among pupils are very positive; parents from different backgrounds are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school. Pupils' diverse backgrounds are recognised and valued in Religious Education and appropriate adaptations to the school's schemes of work are made. Pupils have a sense of the wider world, other people's beliefs, cultures and needs.