



INSPECTION REPORT

School: St Brigid's RC Primary School
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Headteacher: Mrs Julie Miles
Chair of Governors: Father Derek Mc Cartney

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: December 2011
Date of previous inspection: March 2007
Reporting Inspector: Mrs Margaret Dolan

Information about the school

St Brigid's is a voluntary aided Catholic primary school in the diocese of Salford serving the parishes of St Anne and St Brigid in East Manchester. The school serves a very diverse community including White British, Irish, European, Asian, African and Caribbean heritage with a significant number of children from the travelling community. Almost 20% of the children speak English as an Additional Language. The admission number is 30 and there are 207 children between the ages of 3 -11 and 98% of the children are baptised Catholics. The percentage of children entitled to receive free school meals is more than double the national average. There are 34 children on the special needs register of whom 1 has a statement of special educational need and 3 children have intensive support.

There are 11 teachers working at St Brigid's of whom 73% are Catholic. Three teachers have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or an equivalent qualification.

Overall Effectiveness

Grade 2

St Brigid's is a good Catholic school where children feel loved and cared for. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is good and the children are very proud of their school. Staff are excellent role models and they encourage the children to achieve high standards through praise and example.

The prayer life of St Brigid's School is very good and the children have many opportunities to take part in Mass, prayer liturgies and other forms of reflective and private prayer. Provision for Religious Education is good and is well monitored by the Religious Education coordinator.

The dedicated and enthusiastic headteacher with the support of all the staff and the governing body ensure that teaching and learning at St Brigid's School is not only about attainment but is also about developing the whole child for their future place in society.

Capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 2

Capacity for sustained improvement at St Brigid's School is good. Since the last Religious Education inspection changes in staffing have included a new headteacher, deputy headteacher and Chair of Governors. The headteacher, staff and governors have a shared vision of the religious life of the school and there is a strong commitment to improving standards and attainment in Religious Education. Monitoring is good and the Religious Education coordinator and headteacher have carried out regular classroom observations and book scrutinies. There is a well organised system for assessment and all the children have levels of achievement and are making at least satisfactory progress.

Teaching is generally good with aspects of outstanding practice especially in Key Stage 2 and there are plans to develop these aspects further by incorporating opportunities for sharing good practice with colleagues. There is a shared staff commitment for improvement and development and children are inspired by the motto, 'dream it, believe it, achieve it,' which is displayed around the school.

The Religious Education coordinator is diligent and committed to the Catholic life of the school. There are many opportunities for different forms of prayer with the whole school community and in class groups and the children are well behaved and reverential in Mass and in prayer and worship. The staff are very supportive of parish life and of the sacramental programme and members of staff join with parishioners as catechists.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- 1. Develop the good teaching practice seen in Key Stage 2 throughout the school**
- 2. Continue to develop links between the Religious Education coordinator and the Religious Education link governor to formalise the reporting of monitoring and developments in the Religious Education curriculum**

PUPILS

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

Grade 2

Outcomes at St Brigid's are good. From a low starting point in nursery achievements by the end of Year 6 are broadly satisfactory. Progress in Religious Education is good and pupils achieve at national levels and above. The children are very proud of their school. Teachers provide a stimulating curriculum with good use of resources from the internet as well as other sites and they are committed to promote the Catholic faith, through knowledge and understanding. Teachers enhance the new diocesan syllabus, The Way, The Truth and The Life, with cross curricular links including literacy, music and art. Outcomes in Religious Education are linked with literacy and the same high expectations are promoted in both areas.

Staff are outstanding role models for the spiritual life of the school. Planning and evaluations for prayer, collective worship and liturgies is thorough and takes into account the liturgical year, Religious Education curriculum topics and local and national issues. Children from Year 1 to Year 6, plan and prepare half termly class Masses including readings and bidding prayers which take

place in church and are attended by families and parishioners. There are beautiful Prayer areas and displays of children's Religious Education work in classrooms and during inspection, there were Advent wreaths and candles displayed prominently and referred to in the children's prayers. All the children take part enthusiastically in Religious Education lessons and children of different cultures and faiths are well integrated into school life.

There is an excellent musical tradition in the school and this permeates all the areas of the curriculum. At the school Mass the music and singing enhanced the celebration including the playing of drums to accompany one hymn. The children entered the hall quietly and the Parish Priest wore vestments created by the children for the feast of St Brigid. The words of the hymns were on a screen at the back and also the responses to the Mass to help the children to become familiar with the new liturgy and to encourage them to participate fully in the celebration. Action hymns helped the younger children to understand the Mass and to take part at their own level of understanding.

A prayer session seen during inspection in Early Years reminded the children that the greatest gift that was given to them was Jesus. A candle was placed in the centre of the circle and the children considered the words peace, love, fairness and sharing. After sharing their own stories the words were placed around the candle and the children were reminded to remember the words during the day when they played together. They ended with the prayer, 'Thank you, Jesus, for bringing us love.' The children in the prayer and worship session seen in Year 1 were thinking of Jesus as the 'Light of the World.' The children sat quietly and listened to a reading from the prophet Isaiah, and then read out their Advent promises, written on paper leaves, which were made into an Advent wreath. A very good liturgy in Year 5 began with a video and poem about waiting. Examples of things we wait for and responses from the children reminded them that waiting is a time of preparation and is to be enjoyed. The behaviour and singing was excellent and all the children were given a candle prayer to take home. The children in Year 3 had made Christingle candles. Sitting in a circle in a darkened room with music playing quietly, the children considered the symbols on the candles and talked about the Fruits of the Holy Spirit and their relevance in our lives. After singing, 'This Little Light of Mine,' they were reminded that Jesus was born in a stable to show that we don't need lots of possessions, just family, friends and each other. There are also celebration assemblies each Friday and parents are invited to attend at the end of each term.

Children enjoy the Catholic life of the school and the Religious Education lessons. During lessons children give answers that are reflective and thoughtful. They were able to talk about their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and they were able to use the correct words for the celebration of the sacraments. The displays and prayer areas around the school remind the children of their faith life and encourage them to reflect on the way they live their lives. Older children have responsibilities around the school including play leaders in the Key Stage 1 playground. There is a school council and the children take ideas from their classmates to meetings to be considered by the senior leadership team. They are also involved in fund

raising for national and local charities including CAFOD, Caritas and the Brothers of Charity who help needy families in the area. The children are very proud of the achievements of their school and one child said that the school, 'gave you confidence and encouraged you to do well.'

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

Grade 2

The provision for Catholic Education at St Brigid's School is good. Planning is well organised and follows the diocesan guidelines and 10% of curriculum time is devoted to Religious Education. Pupil assessments are carried out half termly in the children's Religious Education assessment books and progress is noted and monitored. There are regular classroom observations and book scrutinies by the Religious Education coordinator and these are fed back to staff and form part of the Religious Education coordinators annual report. Resources are kept centrally for use by all staff and they are regularly updated and and renewed. The new diocesan syllabus, The Way, The Truth and The Life has been purchased and is now used throughout the school.

Teacher's subject knowledge is good and they are good personal and professional role models. Lessons are well planned, interesting and generally well differentiated. In a lesson in Year 2 seen during inspection a nest of boxes were opened each containing a different figure from the nativity. The children sat quietly as each figure was introduced. The children discussed God's greatest gift to us, Jesus, and discussed what they could do in return as a gift to God. They then went into their groups where some children were writing alliterative poems about their personal gifts at Christmas and other children were thinking of three ways they could help other people and writing them on concertina figures. In Year 4 children tried to empathise with Joseph by thinking of words to describe how he would have felt when the angel came to see him. They used the words to compose a diary entry from Joseph with differentiated worksheets and checklists to support their task. The teacher had high expectations of the children and reminded them to use the correct punctuation marks in their work. The very good lesson in Year 6 began with a thought provoking video showing how other people were getting ready for Christmas. The teacher asked the children how they could get ready during Advent and then the children in groups were given a list of priorities including practical preparations and more meaningful ways to prepare. The children wrote their own Advent promises on a heart shaped card and held them in their hands as they sang Silent Night with an emphasis on, 'Christ our Saviour is Born' at the end of the lesson. The children in Early Years listened to the story of Christmas as pictures were shown on the screen and two children dressed up as Mary and Joseph to make the story come alive. They were enthralled by the animated story telling by the teacher and this was interspersed with songs they had already learnt. The children were very well behaved and responded well when asked questions.

World religions are taught in Key Stage 2 during a themed week and the children have a special assembly at the end of the week to show the other

classes what they have learnt. They especially enjoyed the practical activities and visits to the Jewish Museum and the Buddhist Centre in Manchester. Parents are aware of their right to withdraw pupils from Religious Education and Prayer and Worship but this has not been requested.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

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

Grade 2

Management of the Catholic life of the school is good. The mission statement is displayed prominently in the school reception area and children take their interpretation of the mission, 'Dream it, believe it, achieve it,' into all areas of their school life. There is also a beautiful stained glass window designed by the children in the entrance.

Religious Education is carefully planned and policies and other information is contained in the well organised Religious Education coordinators file. Teachers attend diocesan workshops and the coordinator ensures that regular updates from the diocese are passed on to staff. All staff have Religious Education objectives as part of their performance management and two members of staff are beginning the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies in January.

The Chair of Governors is also the Parish Priest and is a regular and welcome visitor to the school. He is also link governor for Religious Education and is keen to be more involved in working with the religious Education coordinator on monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum. Governors attend school events and are very supportive of the Catholic life of the school. They are kept up to date on Religious Education through the headteacher's reports to governors and Religious Education is given priority in the School Improvement Plan and the Self Evaluation Form. Governors attend relevant training both through the diocese and other outside agencies.

Parents receive regular newsletters to inform them of events in school and they are welcome to attend celebration assemblies, class Masses and liturgical events. During Holy Week this included the Stations of the Cross and a Passion Play. Parishioners are also invited to school events and the staff of the school take part in parish life including Christmas and Summer Fairs and celebrations for the feast of St Brigid. The school is also involved in the community through the choir performances at The Velodrome and at the Cornerstones Centre and by fundraising and collecting items for Revive and the Brothers of Charity. The school hopes to take part in the diocesan Relay of Prayer and are awaiting a partner country to be allocated to the school.