

St Francis RC Primary School, Ellenbrook Close, Gorton, Manchester, M12 5LZ.

Inspection date 23rd June 2015

Reporting Inspectors Mr John Thorpe
Mrs Marie Kwiatkowski

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

Type of School Catholic Primary
 URN 105529
 Age range of pupils 3-11 years
 Number on roll 230
 Appropriate authority The Governing Body
 Chair of Governors Mr Michael Campbell
 Headteacher Mrs Louise Frize
 Religious Education Subject Leader Mrs Esther Nadin
 Date of previous inspection April 2009

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The quality of the Word of God community	1	
The quality of the Welcome community	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	1	
The quality of Witness	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Francis is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school in the Diocese of Salford serving the parishes of Sacred Heart and St Francis in Gorton, Manchester. The school is an inner-city school, 3 miles east of the city centre. Most pupils live in the immediate vicinity, an area where there is some significant social and economic disadvantages. There are high levels of economic disadvantage and social deprivation. This is an average sized school with 256 pupils on roll of whom 171 are baptised Catholics. 41% of pupils are eligible for free school meals and Pupil Premium Grant, this is above the national average. The age range of pupils is from 3 to 11 years, the school Admission Number is 30. 21.5% of pupils have been identified as having a special education need of some kind. 7 of these pupils have Education and Health Care Plans. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is above average at 64%, as is the number of pupils for whom English is an additional language at 49%; 39 languages are spoken in the school. There are 14 teachers of whom 3 are Catholic, 1 of the Catholic teachers holds the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING

St Francis is an outstanding Catholic school. It has a strong Catholic ethos with its mission statement at the very centre of everything that takes place there. All pupils are encouraged to be the best they can be at all times. The governors place their trust in the very dedicated headteacher and her deputy. They have gathered around them a team of highly skilled teachers and teaching support that is totally committed to the school and its pupils. All pupils make outstanding progress in their learning, their personal development and their religious literacy.

Relationships within school are based on the Gospel values of Jesus Christ. The whole school community celebrates the gift of every individual as they believe they are created in the likeness of Christ. Relationships between home, school and parish are outstanding as are relationships between pupils and between pupils and their teachers. To support these pupils and their families the school employs a social worker and a professional counsellor. The collaborative working of the school and parish ensures the pastoral, spiritual, social and emotional needs of the pupils and their families are fully met. Pupils are outstandingly well behaved, respectful and considerate towards each other and the adults around them. Lessons observed ranged from good to outstanding. All pupils make very good or outstanding progress including those with SEND. The well informed and very active governing body has a well-established role in monitoring the work of the school and is immensely proud of the school achievements.

Parents are committed to the school, believe it is constantly improving the quality of its provision and feel very much part of its daily life. Following the last Section 48 inspection (April 2009) issues identified for improvement have all been addressed.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- Pupils clearly love their school and have a high level of concern for each other.
- Relationships between all staff and pupils are outstanding.
- Commitment and dedication of all staff is outstanding.
- The governing body, headteacher and all other staff share a clear vision for the future.
- The school supports its pupils to achieve outstanding outcomes.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The spiritually dedicated headteacher, supported by her deputy and other leaders, are totally committed to providing strong, Catholic leadership for the school. The headteacher and the RE subject leader share a clear understanding of the nature of Catholic education and together with other members of the leadership team, promote the Catholic life of the school very effectively. The governing body is well led by the informed chair. The headteacher provides excellent reports to the governing body that ensure all aspects of school life are brought to their attention. Governors trust the judgement of key leaders and provide the necessary support. Many governors provide in-school support each week, attend school events out of hours and attend training. Funding for religious education resources is readily available. Religious education teaching enjoys at least 10% of available teaching time.

The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and is totally committed to supporting and encouraging pupils, staff and families. Unfortunately, the parish priest was unable to meet inspectors. The school gives excellent support to the parish sacramental programme.

Parents are kept well informed about the school through newsletters. Parents spoke highly and enthusiastically about the school. There are excellent home, school and parish links. The school promotes community cohesion by helping all pupils to appreciate the range of religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds within the school. The school is committed to the most vulnerable, having in place systems to ensure pupils thrive in a supportive, harmonious and safe learning environment. Pupil chaplains are developing their key role in leading prayer and worship in different ways across the school.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS OUTSTANDING

The mission statement is at the very core of the school curriculum. It is contemporary; being reviewed annually by staff and pupils, as well as the governing body of the school. Classroom displays are of a high standard throughout the school. Displays on corridors and other areas are all tangible, vibrant evidence of the Word of God influencing the life of the whole school community. During the inspection, the headteacher started the day with 'Wednesday Worship' that involved the whole school considering 'What made you feel better when you were feeling unwell?' There was a bible reading, prayer reading and singing, all perfectly relevant and shared respectfully and reverently. The choir sang beautifully.

From an early age, pupils are learning about the importance of God in their lives and are beginning to develop their religious literacy. In the EYFS, pupils identified by name objects seen on their visit to the parish church and enthusiastically discussed their religious significance. Older pupils in Key Stage 1, listened to and re-told the story of Pentecost. Pupils led discussion groups focused on the gift of the Holy Spirit that included: love, kindness, respect, thoughtfulness and charity. As part of the preparation for transition to the high school, Year 6 pupils discussed the gifts and talents they have been given to use in the service of God. Pupils considered the opinions of others and reflected on matters such as belief, self-belief, determination and courage. At an age appropriate level, all classes were reflecting on 'Big Questions' of faith, being well supported by teachers, teaching assistants and their knowledge of scripture.

In all classes, there was a calm, purposeful atmosphere conducive to learning. Children benefited from thoughtful teaching and the excellent deployment of support staff. A range of teaching and learning methods were used that helped children to understand the Word of God. Drama, ICT, song and prayer all contributed to the high quality lessons. All teaching observed was at least good, with much of it outstanding. Children's learning was equally good, at times outstanding. Children are obviously accustomed to discussion, sharing ideas, which develop thinking skills. Inspectors looked at children's work from across the school. It is clearly the case that work in RE books is at least in line with standards in Literacy books. Great care is taken with presentation. Marking was consistent across the school; the best establishing a brief dialogue, suggesting improvements and next steps.

THE QUALITY OF THE WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

St Francis provides a very warm, welcoming and totally inclusive environment for all its pupils, their families, staff and visitors. This is a calm school, clean, bright and airy. The whole school community value the quality of their built environment and treat it with respect. Similarly, the distinctive culture and ethos, based on a shared knowledge and understanding of Christian beliefs and Gospel values, enables the school to identify and respect the diversity of its population. The importance of the dignity of the individual is clearly evidenced at all times. Staff go out of their way to ensure that all visitors are welcomed with love and respectful care. On entering the school, visitors are made immediately aware of the school's mission; that they are in a place of learning and the operational significance of the 5 W's. A strong commitment to safeguarding in no way compromises the genuinely warm welcome. 'Happy Tuesday' organised by the pupil chaplains presented families with the opportunity to enter school along a red carpet whilst singing and dancing! Many parents of pupils in Reception Class stayed in school to share breakfast with other families. Many of the parents spoken to confirm that such 'events' were typical and not arranged for the benefit of the inspectors. Parents spoke highly of the school and the opportunities they are given to develop a sense of belonging. One parent whose daughter could not be offered a place in school in September 2015, pleaded with inspectors to provide a place saying "I love this place!" Another parent of Key Stage 1 child commented on the many improvements that have taken place since the arrival of the current headteacher.

Pupils were polite and well-mannered throughout the day. Pupils asked inspectors if they needed any help several times during the day. Relationships between pupils and staff are outstanding, which encourages a sense of belonging, community, acceptance and genuine value. Pupils spoke confidently about the school, their lessons and their teachers, all were obviously proud of their school. The school celebrates diversity and believes the school is a better place because of its diversity. There is an annual Multi Faith Week in school predominantly planned by pupils. During the visit inspectors observed Key Stage 2 pupils experiencing a Passover meal with pupils discussing the symbolism of Pesach artefacts.

The school has an effective Induction Programme for NQT's which successfully inducts them into the Catholic life of the school.

THE QUALITY OF THE WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

St Francis' school community clearly demonstrates respect and care for one another and service to all. Pupils are provided with a safe and secure environment where all procedures to safeguard and protect are fully endorsed. Children are encouraged to make the right choices, they feel safe and are free to express their opinions and know that these will be valued. This has produced children that are caring and have a sense of right and wrong. Children's behaviour was seen to be excellent at all times. Staff and pupils are happy to be in school and relationships between all are of high quality. All of these aspects indicate the total commitment of all staff to the living out of the mission statement.

Staff and governors are sensitive to the needs of the pupils in their care and strive to meet these needs in a thoughtful and caring manner by utilising the services of a range of external agencies. A Caritas Social Worker attends school each week to provide support to pupils and their families. A professional counsellor visits school to discretely provide 'Mharrie Time' to pupils with special needs. The pupils interviewed during the inspection were extremely articulate and well-informed. They knew exactly what to do should they experience bullying or discrimination of any kind. They had a keen sense of right and wrong, fair and unfair.

A compassionate and caring ethos leads to the school supporting national and international charities which develops naturally from accepting responsibility for those less fortunate than yourself, on a daily basis, from a very early age. The school's 'Open Door' policy is very much appreciated by parents.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

Provision for worship is outstanding, prayer and worship are at the heart of the school community. Pupils' respond well to collective worship opportunities. They worship daily and are very comfortable expressing themselves during prayer. Through prayer, pupils are provided with a wide range of rich and meaningful

opportunities to strengthen and develop their relationship with God. Whole school assembly led by the headteacher enabled all pupils to engage in prayer and reflect on bible stories. Pupils composed and read aloud their prayers, the choir sang, whilst other pupils wrote down their thoughts and feelings.

Celebrations take place throughout the year following the liturgical calendar. Christmas, Easter and Lenten celebrations are always well attended by parents. Every room has a prayer focus area which is often decorated with objects of devotion and pupil's own prayers. Prayer has a high profile in school, pupils are happy to write their own spontaneous prayers and share them with others. Year 6 pupils were seen to be very competently planning a collective worship opportunity for another class on the theme of 'small things make a big difference.'

Pupils attend masses in the parish church and are seen by the local community as a practicing, worshipping community. Staff lead the pupils through the Sacramental Programme supported by parish catechists. The parish priest visits school regularly and joins pupils in class.

THE QUALITY OF THE WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

The school is held in high regard by the local community and the families it serves. Pupils know that they are loved by the school staff and they experience this love every day. This is the manifestation of the school mission statement, giving witness to a loving God. Gospel values are to be seen in displays around the school, in classes, in pupil's books and in relationships between everyone. The school is over subscribed.

Adults act as role models of the school's mission and values. They promote the ethos of the school to pupils and the wider community. The hard work and dedication of the staff ensures that children have the opportunity to excel academically and spiritually. Teachers engage pupils with the 'Big Questions' relating to the Catholic faith and always answer questions sensitively and with compassion. The school community knows its responsibilities in terms of equal opportunities, reconciliation and Christian stewardship. This understanding is the driving force behind the school's work supporting national and international charities such as Cornerstones, Key 103 Toy Appeal, St Joseph's Penny, Caritas and Water Aid.

Inspectors spoke with pupil chaplains, school councillors, members of the eco team and the rights respecting group. All present provided evidence that they are given the opportunity to influence the direction in which the school is moving. They believe that the management of the school listens to what they have to say and that they can effect change. Everybody is working for the common good, actively involved in shaping and evaluating the Catholic life of the school.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

Although there are no significant issues to be addressed, the school is encouraged to consider the following:

- Evaluation of the 'Come and See' RE programme and the Sex and Relationship programme;
- Further develop pupil chaplaincy in order to increase their influence across the school.

23rd June 2015

Dear pupils,

Thank you so much for making us welcome when we visited your school in June. You all made us feel very welcome. We had a very interesting day, we really enjoyed listening to your singing, listening to you tell us what you enjoy and what you are learning. You all work very hard each day trying to live out your school's mission statement and be the best you can be. All your work gives praise to God in a beautiful way.

We were very impressed by your behaviour, the respect you give each other and the way you are very proud of your school. Your relationships with each other are very special, you make everybody feel special!

The Bishop of Salford will be very pleased to hear that we think yours is an outstanding school.

Your teachers know what to do next to ensure you progress in the future.

Keep up your very high standards, you have much to be proud of.

'Thank you' and 'Well Done'

Yours sincerely,

Mr Thorpe and Mrs Kwiatkowski
(Section 48 Inspectors)

Summary Report to Parents

On 23rd June 2015 the school was inspected in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The full report has been made available to the school and can also be accessed via both the school website and the Education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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