

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. CUTHBERT'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Heyscroft Road Withington Manchester M20 4UZ

Inspection date June 2010
 Reporting Inspector Mrs. K. A. Morris
 Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Catholic Primary
 URN 105553
 Age range of pupils 3-11
 Number on roll 262
 Appropriate authority The governing body
 Chair of Governors Rev. Fr. Brendan Curley
 Headteacher Mr. Brendan Hennessy
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Mrs. Marie Feeley
 Date of previous inspection June 2007

| The Inspection judgements are: | Grade | Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Inadequate |
|--|--------------|---|
| Overall effectiveness of the school | 1 | |
| Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school | 1 | |
| The quality of Collective Worship | 1 | |
| Achievement and standards in Religious Education | 1 | |
| The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education | 1 | |
| The quality of the Religious Education curriculum | 1 | |
| Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education | 1 | |
| <i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i> | | |

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Cuthbert's is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parishes of St. Cuthbert and St. Bernadette both in the Withington district, a deprived area of Manchester. The age range of pupils is from 3 to 11. The indicative admission number is 45 and there are currently 262 learners on roll of whom 241 are baptised Catholics. 35% of the children are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has been designated as Manchester's Local Authority 'Barrier Free' primary school for children with physical disabilities and a member of the LA's Barrier Free Partnership supporting children and schools across the Local Authority. In addition there are a number of learners on roll with moderate and severe learning difficulties, visual impairment, hearing impairment and behaviour difficulties. Consequently the school has a significant high number of children with special educational needs. 84 children have been identified as having special educational needs and 9 have a statutory statement of special educational need. 39 learners have English as a second language. 14 different languages are spoken in the school and the Local Authority provides funding for a minorities support worker. Pupils enter the Foundation Stage with skills which are below those expected for their age, often with weakness in language and personal and social skills. 10 of the 12.8 (78%) teachers are Catholics and 5 hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or equivalent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Cuthbert's is an outstanding school with a strong Catholic ethos. Excellent leadership and dedicated staff and governors ensure a warm, caring, vibrant and inclusive environment in which all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. The Religious Education programme is well planned and further enhanced by the provision of prayer and worship. This is supported by the quality of relationships, the quality of teaching and learning and the extended involvement in the parish. Teachers are well supported by the excellent deployment of teaching and special needs assistants, administrative staff and site management. Staff at all levels are dedicated to the school. They are excellent role models for pupils and are committed and hardworking. Learners are happy to come to school and their behaviour is exemplary. They are mannerly, polite and friendly showing good attitudes to their learning and they respond well to the teaching they experience. All pupils, including gifted and talented and those with special educational needs, achieve well as a result of the differentiated Religious Education curriculum which meets their needs in this fully inclusive school. Strong home, school and parish links ensure learners and parents are fully supported in their faith journeys.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 48 inspection in June 2007 the school has successfully addressed all issues arising. Assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education have been established and the diocesan recommended guidelines for the study of world religions have also been implemented. The Nursery facilities have been re-modelled. A Foundation Stage play area has been created and the premises have been renovated. Breakfast and after school clubs have been introduced and a family support worker is also employed.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is thorough and realistic. The leadership and management have a clear, focused vision for the school. There is a genuine commitment to ensuring that all involved in the school community recognise the important role they play in the future development of this successful Catholic school as it lives out its Mission Statement. The school's capacity to improve is therefore outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no issues to address. The headteacher and governors are fully committed to continue to build upon their success and develop each initiative to ensure the realisation of the Mission Statement that the school provide "a welcoming, loving and caring environment where the uniqueness of each member is recognised and valued".

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The Mission Statement, reviewed by staff and governors, permeates all aspects of the life of the school and is prominently displayed throughout the premises. The success of St. Cuthbert's is due chiefly to the exceptional team spirit pervading the school which enjoys strong leadership by the dynamic headteacher, dedicated deputy and wholehearted support of the staff and governors. The school benefits to the full from a knowledgeable and supportive parish priest and governing body which discusses and revises Religious Education policies on a regular basis. A shared vision for the ongoing development of the school as a Catholic community is reflected in governor appointments of committed Catholic teachers where possible. The parish priest, who is the chair of governors, the designated governor for Religious Education, who leads the children's liturgy during Sunday Mass, and other governors are all very regular visitors to the school demonstrating excellent knowledge and understanding of school life. The headteacher and governors work well together as an effective team. They ensure that all pupils, regardless of race, religion, ability or social standing have equal opportunities in a cohesive and supportive environment which is accessible to all pupils with a wide range of additional needs. The school is firmly at the heart of the parishes it serves and enjoys close links with outside agencies and other schools in the area. It makes a substantial contribution to community cohesion.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is outstanding. It is a key feature of the school pervading all aspects of its life and underpinned by the clear Religious Education policy which includes prayer and worship. Learners, parents and staff are offered a range of rich meaningful opportunities to develop their relationship with God. Whole school Masses are celebrated at the beginning and end of the academic year, on Holy Days and on special occasions. Class Masses are celebrated fortnightly. Assemblies and services reflecting the liturgical calendar are celebrated with the parish priest, parents and parishioners. These celebrations involve music, singing and drama and pupils write their own bidding prayers. The quality of collective worship and the children's response are monitored regularly by the headteacher and the co-ordinator for Religious Education. During the inspection the theme of the Key Stage 2 assembly was "Fair play or Foul" to explore a growing interest in world events and a sense of justice. The content of the assembly was based on materials supplied by Cafod. This was an excellent example of cross-curricular learning based on global justice and the work of missionaries in particular St. John Bosco. Pupils, regardless of race, culture and ability, take part in the liturgy and this supports the school's work for community cohesion. The school makes provision for the one child who is withdrawn from prayer and worship. Children display confidence and pray with respect and reverence thus demonstrating a developing awareness of the importance of prayer in their lives. Displays and focal areas throughout the school indicate that learners are encouraged to express their spirituality through prayer.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are outstanding. Learners enter the Foundation Stage with skills below those expected for their age. Very good progress is made by the end of Key Stage 1 when learners are able to relate verbally, and in their pictorial and written work, biblical stories they have heard. They know that they are members of God's family and that He made and loves them. Progress by the end of Key Stage 2 is excellent. Learners have excellent factual knowledge of their faith. All learners are able to use religious vocabulary and know prayers appropriate to their age. They are aware of, and respect, the faith diversity of their peers. They understand that they have a responsibility to protect God's creation and they know the difference between right and wrong. They enjoy and respond positively to Religious Education, take pride in their work and are well motivated. Across the whole community there is a feeling of self-worth and self esteem. This has been further enhanced by the introduction of the school council. Learners are increasingly aware of God's presence in their lives and of His love and forgiveness. They are developing a strong sense of responsibility and are aware of the needs of others and support a number of local and worldwide charities. Very clear and effective strategies and systems introduced since the 2007 inspection have ensured that every aspect of the Religious Education curriculum have been prioritised in order that high standards be maintained.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations for themselves and their learners and work hard using a variety of interactive strategies. They demonstrate excellent subject knowledge, an understanding of Religious Education and make good use of diocesan guidelines. Detailed planning, with clearly stated objectives which are fully explained to the learners, leads to well structured lessons incorporating an excellent range of activities and effective use of resources. Assessment systems have been developed to evaluate teaching and learning and provide a focus for future planning. Levelling of pupils' work is in place and a profile of pupils' work is readily available. The school's marking policy is consistently applied and provides feedback and direction for improvement. Information technology is widely used to support teaching and learning and teachers capitalise on opportunities to link Religious Education across the curriculum. Management and organisation in all classes are excellent. Behaviour is exemplary with pupils working co-operatively or independently. Learners listen attentively, respond to questions and use appropriate religious vocabulary. They show an interest in their work and an eagerness to learn. Teaching and special needs assistants provide excellent support for those pupils requiring extra help.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. At least 10% of teaching time is allocated to the subject. Diocesan guidelines are followed and supplemented by activities relating to the liturgical year and a range of other resources, activities and experiences. As part of the school's contribution to community cohesion world faiths are taught using the diocesan recommended guidelines. The school fulfils its status as "Barrier Free" by ensuring that all who learn therein are offered equal opportunities to succeed at the highest possible level. They provide opportunities for children and their families to interact with others from different backgrounds. No child is withdrawn from religious lessons. Extra-curricular learning opportunities include sports, gardening, arts, ICT and cooking. There is a residential visit to Ghyll Head in the Lake District and a day retreat to the Marist Centre in Salford for Year 6 pupils. The importance of curriculum Religious Education is recognised and has a high priority along with other core subjects in the school's improvement plan and financial planning. The school plays an important role in the preparation of pupils for the Sacramental Programme enjoying strong links with the parish leader who is also a member of the school's staff.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school has assessed the leadership and management of Religious Education as good. Inspection evidence gathered judges this to be outstanding. The co-ordinator for Religious Education has excellent knowledge of her subject, a clear vision for her role within the school furthering the outstanding work of the previous co-ordinator. She continues to keep excellent records of teaching and learning and prayer and worship. Records include the use of monitoring, assessing and tracking of pupils' work using the recommended guidelines from the diocese. The subject leader leads staff through regular meetings and with the headteacher provides strong leadership and direction. They lead by example supporting and assisting Catholic and non-Catholic staff in planning and resourcing their lessons. She continues her own professional development by attending diocesan courses and through the involvement of the diocesan teacher advisers. She is fully supported by the headteacher, the parish priest, the designated governor for Religious Education and the staff. Governors are kept informed of Religious Education and prayer and worship by written and verbal reports from the headteacher and the co-ordinator, the parish priest, the designated governor and also by their very frequent visits to the school. Resources for Religious Education and prayer and worship are excellent. Attractive prayer focal tables in classrooms and displays around the school premises reflect the faith life of St. Cuthbert's where Religious Education and prayer and worship have a high profile and where the headteacher, subject co-ordinator and the governing body take very seriously their roles in ensuring the catholicity of the school.