

INSPECTION REPORT

**SACRED HEART
ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Knutsford Road Gorton Manchester M18 7NJ**

Inspection date December 2009.

Reporting Inspector Mrs. Mary McGrail

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

Type of School	Catholic Primary
URN	134479
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Mr. John McManus
Headteacher	Ms. Suzanne Walker
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Ms. Suzanne Walker
Date of previous inspection	May 2007

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	
Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school	1	
The quality of Collective Worship	1	
Achievement and standards in Religious Education	2	
The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education	2	
The quality of the Religious Education curriculum	2	
Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education	1	

The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Sacred Heart is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of the Sacred Heart in Gorton, Manchester. The school is situated close to Manchester city centre in an area of high unemployment. The area's social problems are double the national average. The majority of learners live in the parish. Learners come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, the majority living in local authority or privately rented accommodation. The age range of the learners is 3 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 30 and there are currently 225 learners on roll of whom 194 are baptised Catholics. 47% are eligible for free school meals. 33 learners have been identified as having special educational needs with 5 having a statutory statement of special educational need. 42 learners have English as an additional language. These include Lithuanians, settled travellers, Chinese, Italians and Poles. 8 of the 11 teachers (73%) are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Sacred Heart is a good Catholic school with several outstanding features. It is a welcoming school where learners feel safe and happy. Differences and diversity are recognised and celebrated. It offers its learners a traditional Catholic education in a caring community where all members work as a committed team to ensure respect for all is paramount and "where every heart is sacred". The school is firmly at the heart of the parish it serves. Home, school and parish links are particularly strong. Learners enjoy coming to school. They are polite, friendly and very well behaved at all times. Positive and supportive relationships are a feature of the school. The support and commitment of the parish priest is recognised and valued by learners, staff and parents ensuring all are well supported on their faith journey. The school makes very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the learners. The experienced headteacher leads her supportive staff by her own example of dedication and commitment. Together with the knowledgeable governing body they share a clear vision for the ongoing development of their school to realise the aims of its Mission Statement "...to create a successful learning environment where all are happy, settled and included".

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 48 inspection in 2007 there have been major changes to both staffing and buildings. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2007 and the senior leadership team has been restructured and strengthened. There have been new staff appointments including a newly qualified teacher in September 2009. In September 2008 the school moved to one site which had previously been the junior school. The school was completely refurbished to make it fit for purpose. An Early Years /Foundation Stage Unit was created and most classrooms have been modernised. Additional toilets have been provided. The final stage of the refurbishment has been planned. The majority of the issues identified in the last inspection have been addressed and satisfactorily resolved. Assessment still requires further development. The governing body has been restructured and strengthened.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is honest, detailed and thorough. The headteacher and her senior management team, well supported by the experienced and knowledgeable chair of governors and the governing body, have the expertise, commitment and determination to ensure their vision for the future development of their school is fully realised. Therefore the capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the attainment in writing in Upper Key Stage 2 by offering learners more opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing in Religious Education lessons.
- Establish a file of examples of learners' work which has been levelled and moderated.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school have been judged as good by the school. The inspector judges it to be outstanding. The school has a clear and precise Mission Statement which elaborates on the school motto "...where every heart is sacred". It permeates all aspects of the life of the school and is at the forefront of all policies. It is displayed throughout the school and, during inspection, learners referred to it frequently in their discussions. The dedicated and experienced headteacher gives very good leadership to the school and is ably supported by her senior management team. The restructured governing body is well led by an experienced and knowledgeable chair. With the headteacher the governors share a clear vision for the development of the school. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school making a significant contribution to both collective worship and curriculum Religious Education. The school is very involved in the successful parish organised Sacramental Programme. The family support worker has a valued input into the strong home, school and parish links. In her role as Religious Education co-ordinator the headteacher monitors the planning and delivery of curriculum Religious Education and this includes discussions with learners and book scrutiny. Her evaluations are included in her detailed reports to governors. 7 teachers currently hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies qualification. The governing body is encouraged to support all teachers in acquiring this qualification. As part of the school's contribution to community cohesion links with other schools are being developed and strengthened.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is outstanding and is based on the school's clear policy statement for it. Throughout the school year, learners, parents, staff and parishioners are welcomed into the worshipping community through assemblies and Masses thus strengthening their relationship with God. Whole school Masses are celebrated at the beginning and end of the school year and on special feast days with class Masses each week on a rota basis. The Eucharistic service celebrated during the inspection by the parish sister and Year 4 was a very good example of learners being fully involved with readings, prayers, offertory procession and music. They were reverent and respectful throughout the service. A whole school "praise assembly" is held weekly led by classes on a rota system. Parents, governors and parishioners are welcome. Key stage assemblies are held weekly. Class collective worship is a feature of the provision reflecting the Religious Education curriculum or the liturgical year. The one attended in Year 3 during the inspection, on the theme of Advent, was a genuine gathering together to praise, thank and petition God. Prayer has a high profile in school. Learners are familiar with the traditional prayers of the church and are happy to share their own spontaneous prayers with others. Opportunities for private, collective and reflective prayer are offered and staff and learners attend retreats during the year. The provision is fully inclusive and no learner is withdrawn. Assembly themes demonstrate how respect for, and understanding of, all faiths are encouraged.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good overall. Learners enter the Early Years/Foundation Stage with attainment well below national expectations. Progress is consistently good in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Their oral knowledge is far superior to their writing skills. They use good religious vocabulary when discussing their ideas or retelling stories they have heard. The more able are capable of writing simple prayers. In Lower Key Stage 2 there is evidence of well written work detailing the learners' own interpretation of stories they have heard. Clear progress is evident. In Upper Key Stage 2 more opportunities could be given for learners to produce extended pieces of writing on religious topics. Discussions with learners indicated the more able have a good factual knowledge of their faith. Learners appreciate their involvement in school decisions through the school council and the Eco club. They show a good understanding of their responsibility to care for the less fortunate in society and therefore give generous support to local, national and international charities. The older learners are happy to accept their responsibility to nurture the younger members of the school community by "being good examples" for them.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspector agrees with the school that the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good and lessons observed during the inspection confirm this judgement. All teachers plan their lessons with a clear focus. Lesson objectives are made clear to the learners at the beginning of the lesson including the teachers' expectations of the learners. A range of teaching styles and presentations is employed to meet the requirements of the lesson and the age of the learners. Resources are used effectively to enhance the learning process. Technology is used effectively and teaching assistants help those learners who require extra support. There are examples of very good assessment strategies in some classes although this is not consistent throughout the school. The school is encouraged to moderate learners work to ensure consistency in levelling. The establishment of an assessment file might be a useful tool to employ. Work is generally well marked. Constructive comments identify how work could be improved or learning extended. Learners have good attitudes to their learning. They are keen to be involved in lessons, enjoy their work, are enthusiastic and work collaboratively in small groups. They discuss their work sensibly and are always very well behaved.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The Religious Education curriculum is good with some outstanding features. The school has an up to date policy statement on curriculum Religious Education. All lessons are carefully planned reflecting the Religious Education curriculum provided by the diocese. These guidelines are supplemented with a wide range of good quality resources. The diocesan World Faiths programme is used in Key Stage 2 to support the school's contribution to community cohesion. The time allocated to curriculum Religious Education meets both national and diocesan requirements. The very well organised parish Sacramental Programme, involving a class teacher, the parish sister and the family support worker as catechists, together with the significant support of the parish priest into the Religious Education curriculum all have a positive impact on the overall provision. The SEAL project and yearly retreats extend the range of opportunities offered to learners through the Religious Education curriculum. Visits to the school by a range of external providers enhance the provision. The quality of collective worship and the links made with the Religious Education curriculum has a significant impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the learners. No learner is withdrawn from Religious Education lessons.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education has been judged by the school as good. The inspector judges it to be outstanding. The headteacher took over this role when she was appointed to the school in 2007 and there is a clear and realistic improvement plan in place for Religious Education. All aspects of Religious Education are monitored and evaluated. Records are kept. Learners work is scrutinised and teachers' planning and curriculum delivery are monitored. The outcome of these evaluations forms a component part of the headteacher's reports to governors. The parish priest is the designated governor for Religious Education and through his many visits to school he is able to ensure that governors are kept well informed. Resources have been externally audited and are supplemented as necessary with details being kept electronically. The experienced chair of governors meets regularly with the headteacher and governors are encouraged to make suggestions for how the Religious Education curriculum could be developed further. All classrooms have a focal area for prayer and attractive displays throughout the school clearly reflects its faith life.