

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. JOSEPH'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Shepherd Cross Street Halliwell Bolton BL1 3EJ

Inspection date December 2010

Reporting Inspector Mrs. M. Dolan

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

Type of School Catholic Primary

URN 105223

Age range of pupils 4-11

Number on roll 200

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair of Governors Mr. Andrew Kearney (November 2010)

Headteacher Mr. Paul Lock

Religious Education Co-ordinator Miss Catherine Outram

Date of previous inspection November 2009

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	2	
The quality of Collective Worship	2	
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	2	
<i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i>		

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Joseph's is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parish of St. Joseph in Halliwell which is a district close to the centre of Bolton. The majority of the pupils live in privately owned terraced houses or low cost rented accommodation. About two thirds of the school population reside in Halliwell and Crompton, two of the most deprived wards in Bolton. There are currently 200 pupils on roll aged from 4-11 years. The school does not have a nursery class. 120 of the children are Roman Catholic and a small number belong to other Christian denominations. There is a small cohort of Moslem and Hindu children. 13% of pupils have English as an additional language. 33% of pupils are eligible for free school meals and 28% have been identified as having special educational needs. 2 of the pupils have statements of special educational need. Pupils are admitted to the school from 12 different pre-school settings. Attainment on entry to the school is wide ranging with many children being below the national average. There are 7 full time teachers and 3 part time teachers. 7 teachers (70%) are Catholic and 3 teachers have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or equivalent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Joseph's is a good Catholic school. Since the last inspection a new headteacher has been appointed in September 2010 and he is being ably supported by a strong governing body. The chair of governors has only been in post for a month but he has been on the governing body for 12 years and is already committed to school improvement. Relationships are good between staff and pupils and the teachers generally have high expectations of the children in Religious Education. The staff are good role models. There is a new Religious Education co-ordinator who began teaching at the school in September 2010. During the inspection the children were well behaved, polite and friendly and showed a good attitude to their learning. Year 6 pupils help as play leaders in the infant playground and they also help in Reception class with the 'Bus Brush' project which is aimed to encourage dental hygiene. The Catholic ethos of the school is strong with very good provision for the pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 48 inspection in November 2009 key issues concerning performance management have been addressed. All staff now have a performance management objective for Religious Education and this includes using the whole school planning tracker and half termly assessments for Religious Education. A central resource area for Religious Education has been established in the staff room including books, audio-visual aids, religious artefacts and a variety of aids for display.

Capacity to improve

The new headteacher has a very strong vision of how he would like Religious Education to progress in school and he has high expectations of pupils and staff. He has updated the self evaluation form with the Religious Education co-ordinator, governors and all the staff. Reports are given to the governors' whole effectiveness committee and there are now 2 link governors for Religious Education, one looking at the religious life of the school and one to look at attainment in curriculum Religious Education. The new Religious Education co-ordinator has established a monitoring system including assessments and book scrutinies and the progress is reported to governors regularly. New building work has enhanced provision and has improved morale in pupils and staff. The school shows a strong capacity for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Review assemblies, collective worship and liturgies to ensure that pupils are involved in preparation in ways appropriate to their age.
- Establish World Religions in a more systematic and inclusive way to ensure that the pupils are aware of the differences in faith and traditions in their community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good with outstanding features. The new headteacher, who has been in post since September 2010, is committed and enthusiastic and he is keen to develop the spiritual life of the school. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school. The Mission Statement underpins all that happens in the school and it is evident in the school's practice, procedures and policies. It is reviewed regularly and this includes input from the school council. Religious Education is addressed in the School Improvement Plan. The governing body is fully informed of the Catholic aspects of school life through the headteacher's report and visits to the school. Developments in Religious Education are discussed by the headteacher and the new chair of governors who is a weekly visitor to the school. The newly appointed Religious Education co-ordinator gives regular reports on progress. There is to be a staff and governors session in the spring term to look at particular aspects of Religious Education. The chair of governors works in the school community and is well known to the families. The Catholic ethos of the school is implicit in the schools inclusivity and in the daily care and guidance of each child. It is fostered through worship, celebrations and charitable works. The school is involved in the community through harvest deliveries and carol concerts in care homes in the area. The Catholic life of the school and its commitment to community cohesion is further enhanced by the number of charities it supports including CAFOD, Rainbow Family Trust, Bolton Hospice, Caritas and Operation Christmas Child. In the last year substantial sums have been raised. Pupils have also been involved in generating support for injured soldiers. Respect is actively promoted throughout the school. Governors give priority to the appointment of Catholic teachers. Teachers who do not have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies are encouraged to obtain this qualification.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is good. The school has a policy for prayer and worship and there are daily opportunities appropriate to the ages of the pupils. Assemblies and liturgies are planned and recorded and the children take part enthusiastically although some of the older pupils could be more involved in initial planning and preparation. The inspector was able to celebrate Mass with the Year 6 children where the theme was "Saying yes to God". The children were very attentive and took part through formal readings and bidding prayers. In Year 2 the children were considering Advent. They were sitting in a semi-circle facing a beautiful focal point with flowers, religious objects and a candle to create a sense of awe. A handling cross was passed around and the children said their own thank you prayers to God. At the end of the service the children were given a small golden flame to wear to remind them of the part the Holy Spirit plays in our lives. In the whole school celebration assembly the younger children began the celebration with a song for Advent. Certificates were given out by the headteacher for attainment but also for good behaviour and being kind and this was related back to doing things the way God would have liked us to. The children took part attentively and with reverence. No parents have asked for their children to be withdrawn from prayer and worship and all children, including those from other faiths, respond positively during times of prayer and worship. Parents are welcome to attend school and class masses, liturgies and assemblies.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good. Work in children's books is of a good standard and the children show great pride in their books. Formal assessment of children's work in Religious Education is conducted in line with the diocesan guidelines and half termly assessments are recorded and collected by the Religious Education co-ordinator. There is an assessment file showing levels of attainment and this is available for all staff. The Religious Education co-ordinator has conducted book scrutinies and there are plans for lesson observations and learning walks. The behaviour of the children is very good and the children feel safe and are happy and keen to come to school. The school has a clear behaviour policy that reflects attitudes of respect for self and others. There are clear strategies to deal positively with anti-social behaviour such as bullying and racism. Through Religious Education and other aspects of the curriculum, most noticeably personal, social and health education, the children are developing a sense of wonder and a sense of the presence of God in their lives. Through the school council and the opportunities given to older pupils to care for younger ones children grow in responsibility and develop leadership skills. Year 6 pupils are school council officers but all the children have the opportunity to be involved through a series of subcommittees which meet regularly.

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. During this period of transition the school follows REvision 2000 and all staff plan appropriately. Planning is clear and children who need help with their work are ably assisted by competent teaching assistants. Teachers employ a wide range of teaching strategies in delivering Religious Education and regular use of information technology supports teaching and learning. The very good lesson observed in Year 1 began with a slide show session of items and artefacts seen in St. Joseph's Church. Because the items were real the children were very keen to show their knowledge of them and to recall the explanations given to them by the parish priest on a recent visit. The children then went into groups and were involved in clearly differentiated activities for which the children were keen and enthusiastic. The theme of the lesson for Year 5 was "New Hope" and the children were able to recall stories from the bible. They discussed with partners how new hope was seen in these stories. They were then in groups given a story from the new testament and asked to make a 'freeze frame' of an important part of the story. The children were then asked to relate the emotions that they thought the main characters in their story would be feeling. The children were very enthusiastic and were obviously used to approaching their work in this way. This was a very good lesson. In accordance with national and diocesan guidelines 10% of teaching time is devoted to Religious Education. The work in their Religious Education books is marked in line with the school's marking policy. All the classrooms have a display area that includes a prayer table and there are some very good examples of children's work on display. The classrooms are well resourced and this has been improved with the establishment of a central Religious Education resource in the staffroom. World religions are taught whenever they appear in the curriculum but there needs to be a more systematic approach if the children are to be aware of other faiths and traditions.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is good. The school follows diocesan guidelines and teaches Religious Education for the correct number of hours. The curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of the children and it supports the values that the school proclaims in its Mission Statement. The curriculum is balanced and broadly based and prepares the children well for the next stage in their education. There are excellent links with the high school through sport and music and liaison between the schools leads to good transition arrangements for the children. There are strong links between the religious curriculum and the personal, social and health education curriculum. The Religious Education curriculum is enriched by outside visits including the Jewish Museum and by engaging with pupils of other religions in the classes to portray similarities and to extol the presence of God in all our lives. Children have written their own prayers and these are used in assemblies or as part of the displays in the classrooms. The school's use of achievement awards and its provision of a wide range of enrichment activities encourage all the pupils to develop their full potential and this also promotes personal, spiritual and moral development and positive self awareness.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are good. The Religious Education co-ordinator is new and is keen to develop Religious Education throughout the school. There are 2 link governors who are directly responsible for the monitoring of Religious Education in the school and for developing the religious life of the school. The link governors are parishioners and are regular visitors in school. The Sacramental Programme is parish based with strong support from the school. Links with the community also involve Harvest Masses, Stations of the Cross and Christmas celebrations with parents and parishioners. Well planned work is monitored and evaluated and work throughout the school shows continuity and progression. The new planning system shows differentiation and challenge. Resources are well managed and sufficient to deliver the curriculum. Religious Education is given a high priority and is regarded as a core subject area in curriculum development planning. Text messages to parents when their child has worked well or been kind or respectful have been very successful and have shown a different way of using new technology. The school is well placed to develop Religious Education further and to continue to fulfil its' Mission Statement.