

**INSPECTION REPORT**

St Joseph's RC Primary School, Ramsbottom, Bury, BL0 9JJ.

Inspection date Monday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2014

Reporting Inspector Mrs Susan Gedzielewski  
Mr Brendan Hennessy

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

|                                   |                        |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Type of School                    | Primary                |
| URN                               | 105343                 |
| Age range of pupils               | 3-11 years             |
| Number on roll                    | 223                    |
| Appropriate authority             | The Governing Body     |
| Chair of Governors                | Mr William McSorley    |
| Headteacher                       | Mr James Graves        |
| Religious Education Co-ordinators | Miss Christine Raftery |
| Date of previous inspection       | January 2009           |

| The Inspection judgements are:                                  | Grade | Explanation of the Grades<br><br>1 = Outstanding<br><br>2 = Good<br><br>3=Requires Improvement<br><br>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 Joseph's is a Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the needs of the parish of St Joseph's Ramsbottom. There are 223 children on roll including 21 part time children in the nursery. The school is situated in a residential area of the town where accommodation is mainly private houses. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Pupils are predominantly from White British families. Attainment of children on entry to school is in line with national average. Pupils make outstanding progress and achieve exceptionally well by the end of Year 6. The school currently has 15% of children on the Special Needs Register.

St Joseph's is an outstanding Catholic school offering children a rich faith experience within an extremely caring and joyful learning climate. There is unequivocal evidence that the mission and culture statements are a priority; they are known and lived by all. The headteacher leads the school with a clear vision and sense of purpose, recognising the dignity and value of every member of the community. The governors make a highly significant contribution to the work and the Catholic life of the school. Pupils are inspired by exceptional teaching and consistently high expectations across the school. Monitoring and assessment of the Religious Education curriculum has ensured that there has been significant development since the last inspection. The development of the chaplaincy team and the school chapel has enhanced the spiritual life of the school. Parents feel very welcome and valued. They are well informed and feel at ease talking to staff about their child. There is a good relationship with the parish and the parish priest is a regular visitor.

### **KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:**

- The quality of religious education and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding.
- The school's leadership, including that of the governors, is outstanding. Leaders are energised by the task of leading this school and they are an inspiration for the whole community.
- Staff and governors share a collective vision and demonstrate a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education. The school's culture statement is known, lived and witnessed by all.
- Care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding. Pupils' positive behaviour for learning is having a significant impact on raising achievement and improving the progress they make in RE.

### **THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING**

St Joseph's is led by a dedicated and inspirational headteacher with the help of a very competent leadership team. Leadership, including governors, places Religious Education at the centre of the curriculum and ensures that spiritual leadership is outstanding. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is fully embedded across all areas of the curriculum. The governing body is extremely pro-active and committed to continual school improvement and its own effectiveness. The Chair of Governors works closely with the headteacher to ensure all the governors are aware of current issues and their responsibilities. Self-evaluation of the school's work at all levels is a coherent and accurate reflection of rigorous monitoring, self-analysis and challenge. Religious Education and the spiritual life of the school are prioritized in the School Improvement Plan and Headteacher reports to governors. Alongside the Senior Leadership Team, the newly appointed Religious Education Coordinator has ensured that there have been improvements and she is enthusiastic about future initiatives. Although she has participated in monitoring activities this should be extended. The Parish Priest is fully involved in the religious life of the school and visits regularly going into the classrooms and talking to the children. The sacramental programme is delivered by catechists from the parish, some of whom are also governors, and the school is very supportive and staff attend all the sacramental celebrations in the parish. All members of the school staff are committed to the parish and the local community. The headteacher has been deployed by the Diocese in a variety of system leadership roles.

### **THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS OUTSTANDING**

Overall, teaching and learning was found to be outstanding due to some inspirational teaching, exceptional subject knowledge and consistently high expectations. Religious education is given a high priority and pupils take their learning very seriously. Scripture is clearly known, understood and made relevant throughout the

school. In the best lessons, Religious language was promoted and children were given plenty of opportunities to discuss and articulate the importance of God's Word. Creative, interactive teaching strategies were employed and the teacher was skilled at asking questions that extended the learning. Activities were differentiated, challenging and empowering pupils to be creative, independent and reflective learners. Standards of attainment are high in pupils' exercise books and progress over time is outstanding. Marking is having a positive impact on learning and pupils are responding to the teacher's comments. Assessment procedures are embedded across the school and are used to set future targets for pupils. Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education was found to be outstanding. World religions are taught as part of the Religious Education curriculum and this helps children to understand and respect the beliefs and culture of others. The Religious Education budget is set according to the needs of the curriculum and the Catholic life of the school and is adjusted on a yearly basis in line with other core subjects. The school prioritises Religious Education on its professional development programme. Learning continues at home through a variety of initiatives and homework tasks.

### **THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING**

Jesus Christ is at the heart of this welcoming and happy school. Pupils clearly understand the importance of welcoming others into their community and caring for each other. They demonstrated their understanding in a variety of contexts and they are living examples of the school's Mission Statement and Culture Statement. The pupils' sense of ownership and responsibility for what happens in their school and local community is outstanding. Children in Year 6 and Reception are paired up as 'buddies' to promote a sense of belonging and effective systems are in place for induction of new pupils. Inclusion, responsibility and respect are the clearly evidence. The school actively seeks to engage with and supports all members of the wider community and the school is highly regarded within the local community. Partnerships with other schools are well established and promote community cohesion. Parents were extremely appreciative of all the things the school does to support families and pupils with special educational needs. They are particularly appreciative of the way the school communicates with parents, the welcome they receive when visiting the school and all the initiatives the school has introduced to make them feel included. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in school life. Members of the parish and local community share in the life of the school. The parish and school share responsibility for supporting pupils through the Sacramental Programme. All members of staff demonstrate a keen sense of community affiliation and the quality of relationships exemplifies respect for all members of the school community. The PTFA is a vibrant, well organised body which encourages parents and friends to get involved in frequent social and fundraising activities.

### **THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING**

The mission and culture statements reflect the centrality of love, faith and hope in this community. Structures and procedures ensure that all pupils and staff feel safe and are treated with respect and dignity. The behaviour of pupils is outstanding in lessons and around school. They demonstrate resilience, perseverance and motivation. The weekly focus on Statements to Live By, provides a unified approach for reflection on the quality of the schools relationships and was clearly impacting on the life of the school. Children demonstrated a good understanding of health and safety during the whole school assembly. Pupil voice is a priority and the school council is active. Children are asked to take photographs of areas that they feel are unsafe around school to share with the Headteacher. Parents were extremely complimentary about the support given to pupils, but reserved particular praise for the support given to pupils with special needs and disabilities. Those children needing extra support with behaviour, welfare and learning are very well supported. Two members of staff are trained to deliver 'Rainbows' to vulnerable children who are suffering loss or bereavement. The school promotes high attendance and punctuality. The provision for SRE is through the 'In the Beginning' scheme. Pupils are confident that if they have any problems they can speak to a member of staff and that any problems will be dealt with sympathetically. Teachers are approachable and parents feel able to talk with them about issues that concern them and their concerns are dealt with effectively. The quality of transition and induction are such that all children quickly feel part of the school community and loved by those around them.

### **THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING**

Children are provided with a range of opportunities to develop and enrich their prayer life including class and school masses, liturgies, class assemblies, whole school assemblies, classroom prayer and collective worship during RE lessons. Staff are confident at leading prayer and increasingly pupils are given opportunities to lead prayer and worship activities. The pupils have developed highly reflective practices which means they are well placed to enjoy prayer and their singing during the collective worship and in lessons was spiritually uplifting. Children in the Reception class are encouraged to write their own prayers and the prayer box goes home each evening. As they move through school, children become increasingly confident at writing their own prayers and praying for others. Prayer partners have recently been re-launched alongside the Reception / Y6 Buddy initiative. The pupils have developed a good knowledge of traditional prayers. The school has recently introduced mindfulness and meditation into their weekly and daily acts of worship. The Chaplaincy Team is leading new initiatives to enhance the spiritual life of the school including leading prayer in classrooms and the development of a new chapel. Throughout the school there was evidence of high quality resources in all areas. Pupils participate in retreats with two other schools in the Diocese. Parents were extremely complimentary about the school's involvement in the parish sacramental programme and fundraising for Mission Together. Prayer tables in classrooms, display materials and artefacts demonstrate creativity and relevance to the children.

### **THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING**

The school nurtures, supports and challenges the pupils to live out and to give witness to the Mission Statement in their everyday experiences. The statement: "if we do nothing else today, we will show Love, Faith and Hope" is demonstrated and promoted by all members of the community. There are many opportunities for pupils and staff to shape the Catholic life of the school. Pupils clearly demonstrate witness to justice, compassion, reconciliation, love and forgiveness. Observations showed that children treated each other with respect, care, patience, concern and with dignity and there is an emphasis on creating a pleasant working environment for everyone in school. The school fosters a spirit of awe and wonder through religious education and the broader curriculum. A strong sense of belonging to the school community exists and pupils are given leadership responsibilities and their opinions are valued. St Joseph's feast day is celebrated with the parish, friends and families. Close links with the parish are enhanced with the regular visits of the Parish Priest and the work of the catechists for the sacramental programme. The leadership team fully recognise their education endeavour as being integral to the redemptive activity of Christ. The school fully supports the work of charities such as CAFOD, CARITAS, Children in Need, Rotary Shoe Box Appeal and Mission Together. The chaplaincy team are having a positive impact on the spiritual life of the school and they are keen to take on additional responsibilities.

### **AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

- Continue to develop the role of the Religious Education co-ordinator. Further opportunity for her to monitor teaching and to support other teachers across the school.
- Develop the role of the chaplaincy team in order to give them greater opportunity to have an impact on worship and the development of the new chapel.

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2014

Dear Pupils

Thank you so much for the wonderful welcome you gave me when we came to visit you. We really enjoyed learning about all the wonderful things you do at St Joseph's. You and your teachers are working so hard to always do your very best and as a result your school is outstanding.

Your knowledge and understanding of the school's culture statement is very impressive. We saw examples of love, faith and hope in all that you do around school. Your school is a very happy, caring and joyful place.

We enjoyed being part of your lessons and were sorry not to see everyone. Your work is of a very high standard and we could clearly see that you have outstanding knowledge of bible stories, the Church and the lives of Saints. Thank you for showing us so much of what you have been doing. We were extremely impressed with the standard of work in your RE books and your work on display.

It was wonderful to see how you participated in Collective Worship and mediation. Your behaviour was exemplary, your singing was beautiful and your prayers were uplifting. The Chaplaincy Team are doing a wonderful job helping you in school. We have asked them to continue working with you on prayer and worship in the future.

God bless you all.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Susan Gedzielewski and Mr Brendan Hennessy  
(Section 48 Inspectors)

## **Summary Report to Parents**

On 17<sup>th</sup> November 2014 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.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING**

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