

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Wood Street Langley Middleton Manchester M24 5GL

Inspection date November 2010

Reporting Inspector Mrs. Mary McGrail

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

Type of School	Catholic Primary
URN	105818
Age range of pupils	3-11
Number on roll	338
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Rev. Tadhg Mullins
Headteacher	Mr. Martin Atkins
Religious Education Co-ordinators	Mrs. Val Craddock Mrs. Sally Friday
Date of previous inspection	December 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	2	
The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education	2	
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. Mary's is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of Our Lady of the Assumption in Langley, Middleton. The school and parish are situated in the middle of a large inner-city estate originally built for families from the Manchester area. There are high levels of deprivation in this challenging community. The majority of learners live in the parish. The age range of the learners is 3 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 45 and there are currently 338 learners on roll of whom 331 are baptised Catholics. 35% are eligible for free school meals. 132 learners have been identified as having special educational needs with 5 having a statutory statement of special educational need. 5 learners are Looked After Children. All 13 teachers (100%) are Catholics. Over the past five years the school has welcomed Polish, Nigerian, Romanian, Lithuanian and Slovakian families into its community.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Mary's is an outstanding Catholic school. It is highly effective in offering its learners a traditional Catholic education through a vibrant and rich curriculum in a safe, secure and happy environment. Throughout the school community there is a strong sense of shared commitment and team work from all involved in this successful school. The school is firmly at the heart of the parish it serves. Learners enjoy coming to school and work hard to meet the expectations of the teachers. They appreciate the wide range of opportunities they are given to develop their talents. They are friendly and polite and well behaved at all times. Positive and supportive relationships are a feature of this school where everyone is valued and respected and diversity celebrated. The parish priest is very involved with the school and its families ensuring all are fully supported on their faith journey. The school makes excellent provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the learners. The emotional and social needs of the learners and their families are given due consideration. The dedicated *and* hardworking staff are well led by the experienced head teacher. Together with the governing body they share a clear vision for the future development of St. Mary's and, "with Christ at the centre of all we do", are eagerly awaiting the completion of their new school building in 2011.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 48 inspection in 2007 the school has addressed the issue of assessment, identified for improvement, and partially resolved it. There have been several staff changes. Some have left for promotion. A new deputy head was appointed in January 2010. Two new Unit leaders have been appointed as well as staff for the Foundation Stage. For the past twelve months the school has endured the disruption of a new school being constructed immediately next to the existing school. Parts of the school have been dismantled thus reducing the accommodation for classrooms, a library and a hall. Port-a-cabins are now in use as temporary classrooms. The construction work has required the installation of extensions to the security fencing.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is detailed, comprehensive and accurate. The dedicated and experienced headteacher, fully supported by his staff and the governing body, has the enthusiasm, knowledge and determination to ensure St. Mary's will continue to offer a quality education to its learners. The capacity to improve, therefore, is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to develop the assessment process in Religious Education to include examples of learners' work which has been levelled and moderated thus ensuring consistency of standards throughout the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The school's Mission Statement permeates all aspects of the life of the school and is displayed throughout the school. It is at the forefront of all policies. The dedicated and experienced headteacher gives very good leadership to the school and is ably supported by his senior management team. They lead by their personal example. The governors, well led by the knowledgeable parish priest as the chair, are fully supportive of the school but also offer challenge as "critical friends". The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school. He meets weekly with the headteacher, whose reports to the governing body ensure governors are informed of the current provision. Reports are formulated as a result of the comprehensive system of monitoring and evaluation undertaken by the headteacher, his deputy and the Religious Education co-ordinators. The governing body is in the process of appointing a new link governor for Religious Education. The school gives very good support to the parish organised Sacramental Programme. One of the Religious Education co-ordinators is a parish catechist and the school secretary is the parish leader. 8 teachers hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or its equivalent qualification. Two further teachers are studying for the qualification. All 13 teachers are Catholics. The school is very successful in its involvement with the local community. Courses are provided for literacy and numeracy and the school sports field is used by different community groups each evening. The school is a beacon for Catholic education in the area.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is outstanding. The school has a policy statement for collective worship and prayer. Throughout the school year learners, parents, staff and parishioners are given a wide range of opportunities to develop their relationship with God. Whole school Masses are held in church at the beginning and end of each term and special feast days. In these celebrations learners are fully involved through readings, prayers, drama, visual arts and music. Class masses are held in classrooms. The disruption to the school during the past twelve months has restricted the opportunities for the involvement of parents at assemblies because of lack of space in school. Key stage assemblies are held weekly and "Award" assemblies are now held in key stages. Opportunities are given for the learners to plan, organise and participate in assemblies. Non-Eucharistic services are held for Foundation Stage learners. At a recent service to remember Armistice Day the youngest learners managed to remain silent for the full 2 minutes. Prayer is an important aspect of life at St. Mary's. The learners are familiar with the traditional prayers of the church but are also happy to share their spontaneous prayers with others. This was evident in the class worship attended during the inspection. Year 3/4 learners were very honest and reverent as they admitted needing forgiveness for being angry with others. They explained how they felt having said "sorry". Learners attend voluntary prayer sessions in May and October to pray the Rosary. At all observations of learners at prayer they were very reverent and respectful. The provision is fully inclusive as no learner is withdrawn from collective worship. A file of examples of Masses and assemblies indicate other faiths are included in assembly themes.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good with some outstanding features. Learners enter the Foundation Stage with attainment well below national expectations. Progress is good and by the end of Key Stage 1 learners are able to retell stories they have heard and record simple prayers. They use appropriate religious vocabulary. In Key Stage 2 this steady progress continues. By the end of the key stage learners have a good factual knowledge of their faith and discuss topics sensibly using good religious vocabulary. They produce extended pieces of writing when explaining their ideas and knowledge. The older learners are happy to accept responsibility acting as house captains. They are trained as playground pals to arrange activities at lunchtime for the younger learners. They enjoy their input into school life through their involvement in the school council. There have been opportunities for the school council to represent the school at the Big Listen with local authority councillors and for Year 6 to perform a drama at a Manchester theatre. These are good examples of the range of opportunities offered to learners in encouraging them to develop a sound sense of citizenship. They are aware of their need to support the less fortunate in society giving generously to local, national and international charities. Enterprise week is used to develop their imagination and marketing skills to raise money for charities.

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. Teachers have a good knowledge of the Religious Education curriculum and prepare their lessons with care. The learning objectives are explained clearly and learners record these in their books. Resources are well selected and used effectively. Technology is well used by teachers and learners. Discussions are encouraged and a range of teaching strategies used to reflect the age of the learners and the lesson requirements. All work is well marked with good work and special effort praised. Constructive comments encourage extension of ideas and ways of improving work. Learners work is assessed and class lists of attainment updated regularly. A collection of learners' work which has been levelled and moderated would ensure consistency of standards throughout the school. The school is encouraged to develop this process as identified in the School Improvement Plan. Teaching assistants are used effectively to help those learners who need extra help. Learners have good attitudes to their learning. They listen attentively to the teachers' input, ask questions to clarify issues, are keen to be involved in discussions and settle down quickly to complete written tasks. They remain on task until the work has been completed. They co-operate in small groups, in pairs and as members of the larger class group. They are always very well behaved, keen and enthusiastic about their work in curriculum Religious Education.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. The school has a policy statement on curriculum Religious Education. All lessons are planned and based on *REvision 2000* guidelines. The time allocated to curriculum Religious Education meets both national and diocesan requirements. The length of the lessons ensures that curriculum time is used effectively in all key stages. The diocesan World Faiths programme is used effectively in Key Stage 2 and the school's commitment to community cohesion and global citizenship is integral to its Religious Education curriculum. The school uses its staff connections well as evidenced by the involvement of a Muslim teaching assistant who explained about Muslim marriage services to the learners, including dressing in the special costumes worn, and introducing "Bollywood" dancing. During "Africa Week" a special assembly and activities introduced the learners to African culture through art, music, food and dance. A very successful Rainbows support group and the Dinosaur Club give the learners the opportunities to discuss their personal and social development. The Wednesday Word is given out each week. The quality of the collective worship provision and the strong support of the parish priest have a positive impact on the Religious Education provision. The provision is fully inclusive as no learner is withdrawn from curriculum Religious Education. The Religious Education curriculum has a major impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the learners.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are outstanding. With the strong and active support of the headteacher the Religious Education co-ordinators, who are both experienced teachers, ensure all staff are supported in delivering a quality Religious Education curriculum. Teachers' planning is monitored and evaluated. Learners work is monitored regularly and discussions are held with learners about their work. The headteacher and his deputy observe lessons and class collective worship. The outcomes of this monitoring process are evaluated and reported to governors at meetings. The school Improvement Plan for Religious Education and collective worship has clear and realistic targets for developing the provision in the school. The designated governor for Religious Education has recently resigned and meetings with the new governor will be resumed in the near future. The headteacher, parish priest and Religious Education co-ordinator meet regularly to discuss the provision. Governors attend celebrations and Masses. Both co-ordinators attend diocesan training for their continuing professional development and inform other staff on new initiatives at staff meetings. The headteacher has observed schools in other countries through the auspices of the British Council. Every class has a focal point for prayer and displays throughout the school clearly reflect its faith life.