

INSPECTION REPORT

St Mark's RC Primary School, Swinton

Inspection date Wednesday 10th July 2013

Reporting Inspector Mrs Susan Gedzielewski

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

Type of School	Primary
URN	105956
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	235
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mr Neil Whitelaw
Headteacher	Miss Patricia Garner
Religious Education Co-ordinators	Mrs Joanne Latham
Date of previous inspection	December 2006

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 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	2	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Mark's is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic Primary School within the Salford Diocese and is maintained by Salford Local Authority. It serves the parish of St Mark's in Pendlebury. The indicative admission number is 30 and there are presently 235 pupils on roll of which 91% are baptised Catholic. The school has a nursery within its Foundation Stage and all the classes are arranged in single age range. Since the last inspection the school has experienced significant changes in leadership and staff.

The school has an average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. It is situated in an area of mixed social and economic circumstances. Attainment on entry for most pupils is below age-related expectations. There are 3 pupils with statements of special educational needs and there are a total of 27 pupils on the SEND register. 11% of pupils have English as an additional language. Attendance is outstanding at 96%. The school has achieved the bronze Eco Green Flag Award, Bronze School Games Award and Basic Skills Accreditation.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING

St Mark's is an outstanding Catholic school offering children a rich faith experience which permeates all aspects of school life. The school community, very well supported by the governing body, works very hard to ensure the pastoral and spiritual needs of all learners are met. The staff have dedicated themselves to the building up of a Catholic learning community which is a source of awe and wonder, and spiritual reflection. The changes that have taken place to collective worship since the previous inspection have had a significant impact on the spiritual development of pupils and staff. The prayer life of the school is a particular strength.

The children receive a Catholic education that is inspirational and challenging. It enables them to understand their place in the world as future stewards who can influence, change and contribute to the common good for all people. The Headteacher leads the school with a clear vision and sense of purpose recognising the dignity and value of every member of the community. Parents expressed a high level of commitment to the school because it is a Catholic school recognising that their children were respected and valued for their unique gifts and qualities. Pupil voice and responsibility is a strength of the school and pupils take their responsibilities seriously.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- A high level of creativity and reflection is evident in prayer and worship and this is having a positive impact on pupils' spiritual development.
- The spiritual leadership of the Headteacher. Staff and governors share a collective vision and demonstrate a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education.
- The Catholic life, relationships, behaviour and care for all within the school is outstanding.
- The quality of religious education, in particular the children's religious vocabulary. A high standard of religious literacy across the school.
- Teachers' marking is having a positive impact on learning. Pupils respond effectively to the feedback they receive from teachers on how to improve their work.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

Since the last inspection the school has experienced significant changes in leadership. During these many changes, its core mission has remained at the heart of all it does due to the Headteacher's effective leadership and the enthusiasm of the RE coordinator. New initiatives have been introduced to strengthen the Catholic life of the school and address areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Strong leadership from the Religious Education coordinator has ensured that the school has fully embedded the Religious Education scheme and assessment procedures. There is a strong sense of ownership and vision across the community, governors, staff team and pupils and their families who are unified and guided by a

living and interactive Mission Statement. All senior leaders are committed to supporting staff in their professional and spiritual development. New members of staff are warmly welcomed and supported as they are inducted into the school family.

Members of staff and governors have worked hard to implement the 5Ws model and there is a wealth of evidence to support the positive impact that this is having within the school. The school has effective systems for monitoring and evaluating. The Chair of Governors meets with the Head Teacher on a regular basis and the school benefits from the open and productive conversations that this facilitates. Governors share the vision of the Head Teacher and work hard to support her in ensuring the highest quality of provision for the children. All members of the governing body are parishioners at St Mark's Parish and are committed to strengthening the partnership between home, school and parish. Governors understand their responsibilities and are actively involved in school self-evaluation and contribute to the School Improvement Plan.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS OUTSTANDING

The school have creatively used the RE scheme, The Way, The Truth and The Life to inspire and engage pupils in some difficult concepts of faith. Teaching is consistently outstanding and this was evidenced in almost all lessons and particularly when children were observed engaged in role play and reflecting on the 'gift of awe and wonder'. Religious education is given a high priority and pupils take their learning seriously. Pupils' knowledge and religious language was of the highest standard. Religious language was promoted in all lessons and pupils were confident in their use of theological terms. Key words and phrases from the unit of work were on display in classrooms.

The RE curriculum is enriched by learning about other faiths. Pupils Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education was found to be outstanding. Opportunity for the children to reflect upon and share their learning with others in the group was a strong feature in lessons. After key religious events in school the children are given reflection time and opportunity to record in their 'Faith Journals' an individual personal response to the event.

All classes receive a minimum of 10% RE curriculum time. The school's Mission Statement is known, lived and witnessed throughout the school; all children are encouraged to learn a child friendly version of the Mission Statement. Scripture is a focal point of school life; it is shared with children in lessons, assemblies and collective worship. Children have access to bibles which are used in lessons and for independent reading. Books are marked to a consistently high level and clear feedback enable children to understand their next steps in learning. Progress and standards of attainment are at least good, with evidence of outstanding levels of attainment in the majority of year groups.

THE QUALITY OF THE WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

As the school mission statement states: 'At St Mark's RC Primary School, Jesus is a special friend. He helps us to work together by making everyone feel welcomed.' The pupils clearly understood the importance of welcoming others into their community. They demonstrated their understanding in a variety of contexts and they are living examples of the school mission statement. The children are happy and secure within the school. The pupils' sense of ownership and responsibility for what happens in their school was outstanding. The School Council, prayer buddies and 'House' system promote a sense of responsibility and pride. The local community and visitors are extremely complimentary about St Mark's pupils.

The school actively seeks to engage with and support members of the school community. Parents were extremely appreciative of all the things the school does to make them feel welcome and valued. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in school life and the PTA. New families and pupils are welcomed into the school community through a variety of activities to ensure a smooth induction and the child's key worker is a constant source of reassurance for parents. Parents were particularly appreciative of the coffee mornings, library service, 'open door' policy, pastoral care of pupils and the inspirational assemblies.

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. St Mark's give all new staff a warm and supportive welcome. Support teachers and visitors are extremely complimentary about the welcome they receive when visiting the school and they are always happy to return.

THE QUALITY OF THE WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

Parents spoke highly of the pastoral support their child receives in school. Staff and children demonstrate respect and care for each other and for the school uniform of which they are justifiably proud. Teachers are approachable and parents feel able to talk with them about issues that concern them. Pupils are also confident that teachers will treat their concerns seriously. Children who are more vulnerable are especially encouraged to seek adults in school whom they feel they can confide in if they have any problems. Provision to ensure pupils feel safe is outstanding. All statutory policies and procedures are in place and rigorously adhered to due to regular training for staff and monitoring of practice.

The quality of transition is such that all children quickly feel part of the school community. Excellent attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support. The provision for SRE is through the school's own programme and parents have been consulted on the scheme. All staff follow procedures set out in the schools behaviour policy and there are a various reward schemes in operation and celebrated in assembly. The school promotes high attendance and punctuality.

Pupils within the school clearly have a voice and are listened to through School Council and other initiatives. This year the School Council led a road safety campaign to encourage drivers to slow down to 20 mph outside of school and they highlighted the important of e-safety. They make decisions about ways in which the children can raise money for the school's chosen charities and are very enthusiastic about this work.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The spiritual development of pupils is held in the highest regard with children afforded opportunities every day to be involved in collective worship. Significant improvements have been made since the previous inspection to make prayer, acts of worship and assemblies more spiritual and reflective. Whole school collective worship on Monday mornings is led by a different teacher each week and is based on the Sunday Gospel or an agreed theme. As a consequence, both staff and pupils have developed a highly reflective practice that is interactive and joyful. Children respond in an extremely positive way to collect worship opportunities. The whole school assembly and classroom collective worship were uplifting and child centred. To illustrate the importance of showing compassion to oneself, the teacher wrapped a child in a soft blanket. At the end of the classroom collective worship, plants were taken to each class and the children were asked to take care of them as a reminder that we need to care for each other because we are all part of God's family. All children are encouraged to speak to God in their own way.

The school actively prepares pupils to take a leadership role in engaging with families and the parish in prayer and worship. During the Year of Faith the school has increased the number of activities it has undertaken in this respect. Children from Key Stage 2 attend mass with the parish community. Key times are celebrated with special services and masses. The sacramental programme is delivered by teachers in school and all members of staff attend these special masses to show support for the children and their families.

Throughout the school there was evidence of high quality resources in all areas. Prayer tables in classrooms, display materials and artefacts demonstrate creativity and relevance to the children and their witness to faith. Year 6 pupils take part in a day of recollection at the Marist Centre, as well as the Salford leavers' mass at the Cathedral.

THE QUALITY OF THE WITNESS IS GOOD

There was frequent reference to the mission statement in school life and in pupils' learning. Staff and pupils are confident and secure in their witness to Christ, the gospels and the teaching of the church. The school encourage and support its pupils to develop a relationship with God. It fosters a spirit of awe and wonder through religious education and the broader curriculum. The children have an understanding of the beauty and mystery of God's world.

As visitors to the school walk along corridors and in classrooms there are many displays, prayer tables and focuses for worship which reflect witness. Pupils clearly demonstrate witness to justice, compassion, reconciliation, love and forgiveness from the displays around school and the work in their books. 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 pupils are keen supporters of local and international charities. It is clear that the school stands as a witness to Christ's love, forgiveness and compassion when challenges. The support for families in difficulty or any trouble is exceptional.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- The introduction of pupil chaplains in order to further develop pupil leadership in prayer and worship.
- Strengthen the work already undertaken with parents in relation to the sacramental programme, so they have greater involvement in preparing their child for the sacraments.

Wednesday 10th July 2013

Dear Pupils

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

I enjoyed being part of your lessons and was sorry not to see everyone. Your work is of a very high standard and I could clearly see that you have outstanding knowledge of bible stories and the Church. Your creative ideas are very good and I particularly enjoyed the drama that I saw and the 'awe and wonder' activity. Thank you for showing me so much of what you have been doing. I was very impressed with your use of religious vocabulary in all the classes I visited, but especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

It was wonderful to see how you participated in Collective Worship and reflected on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Your behaviour was exemplary and your prayers were uplifting. It reminded us all to show compassion to myself, as well as to others.

You are obviously proud of your school and the uniform you wear. Your school is beautiful and the displays are outstanding. It was good to see so much of the Mission Statement coming through everything you are learning; your friendships and the special way you make everyone feel valued.

Your teachers are keen to help you develop the Catholic life of your school even further and to do this they are going to invite you to consider how you can develop Chaplaincy in your school through training pupil Chaplains. They are also going to do some work with your parents to help you prepare for the sacraments.

God bless you all and have a really happy term.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Susan Gedzielewski
(Section 48 Inspector)

On 10th July 2013 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.

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