

SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT



ST. JOHN VIANNEY ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL
Rye Bank Rd. Firwood Stretford Trafford M16 0EX

Inspection date February 2009

Reporting Inspector Mr. A. Slade

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

Type of School Catholic Special School

URN 106167

Age range of pupils 5-19

Number on roll 95

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair of Governors Rev. Dr. G. F. Byrne

Headteacher Mrs. E. McMorrow

Head of Religious Education Mr. D. Anders

Date of previous inspection January 2004

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	1	
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. John Vianney Roman Catholic School is a 5-19 non-maintained special school. Children are referred there from the Local Authorities of Stockport, Manchester, Salford, Trafford, Rochdale, Tameside and Cheshire. All have a full educational statement of special needs and the majority have moderate learning difficulties. Others have complex learning needs including autistic spectrum condition, speech, language and communication difficulties. There are 95 learners on roll of whom 78 (82%) are Roman Catholics. The proportion of pupils qualifying for free school meals is 38%. 12 of the 14 teachers (85%) are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. John Vianney is an outstanding Catholic school. This is because Catholic principles and practices are so clearly lived out. The Mission Statement explains the essence and purpose of the school as it states that, "St. John Vianney school recognises and accepts that each individual is unique and of value in God's eyes....It sets out to provide a friendly, encouraging environment for all pupils in which their educational and spiritual needs are catered for.....". These principles are very clearly implemented in all aspects of school life but especially in its religious life and teaching. Under the Christian dynamic and supportive leadership of the headteacher and her senior management team, supported by staff and governors, the school is clearly a Catholic institution. As a result of this cohesive determination the school is blessed with high quality and effective provision for Religious Education and collective worship.

Improvement since the last inspection

The last inspection in January 2004 raised three issues which have all been addressed. Personal prayer is promoted amongst the staff and there are prayer areas in classrooms. Much use is made of the chapel and parents are invited to attend key liturgies and Masses. Information communication technology is very widely used in Religious Education. Some links have been established with local schools and the school is anxious to develop these further.

Capacity to improve

The schools capacity to improve is outstanding. Documentation for, and commitment to, improvement are robust. There is a full awareness of the school's current situation and realistic plans exist for the future. This applies to the school as whole, with a priority to develop further its Catholicity, and to the Religious Education department.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consider ways of enhancing the quality of daily assemblies.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The whole school is permeated by Catholic principles in action. This begins with the ideals as expressed in the Mission Statement referred to above. The dynamic implementation of these ideals is seen everywhere. The headteacher and senior leadership team give personal and professional example. This commitment inspires others to follow their example. Priority is given to the Catholicity of the school and this is clearly in evidence in all aspects of its work. High quality display work and the existence of a chapel and the prayer areas in classrooms also reflect this. Even more important is the quality of the pastoral care provision and the professional desire to see pupils progress educationally and personally. Another example is the forthcoming training day devoted to “Mission, Ethos and Spirituality”. All matters pertaining to the school as a Catholic institution are fully in place. These include staffing, resources and facilities for teaching Religious Education as well as time for religious services and activities. The open-minded policies and practices, including the welcoming approach to pupils of all faiths, are evidence of the effective promotion of community cohesion by leadership and management. There is a strong family atmosphere. Behaviour around the school is good and the teachers and support staff show great patience and understanding. The governors, especially the well informed and active chairman, give active support to the school’s religious aims and activities.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is outstanding. Significant events of the church’s year are celebrated with a variety of services including a school Mass and services of reconciliation. The leavers’ Mass is one of the highlights of the school year. The school chaplain is a priest from a nearby parish. The high quality of these services is thanks to the initiative and support of all the staff but especially the Religious Education teachers. The beautiful chapel is at the heart of the school both geographically and spiritually. Each morning and evening there are short assemblies. It would be beneficial if thought was given to ways in which the quality of these could be enhanced. The Monday assembly is devoted mainly to the presentation of certificates to various “pupils of the week”. On Friday afternoons there is a “Celebration Assembly” which celebrates achievements of the previous week. The assembly observed during inspection was a joyous occasion with music, singing, prayers and pupil participation. Each classroom has a prayer area for use for personal prayer. The quality of the displays and artefacts do much to encourage this. There is a staff Mass at the start of the year and prayers at staff briefings. During the inspection a wonderful lesson and prayer service for pupils in Key Stage 2 was observed. There was full participation with music, prayers, readings along with drama and art. It was clearly very meaningful for all the pupils and was the result of careful preparation by all the staff. There are day retreats during the year. Some pupils are involved as sacristans. The way in which pupils of varying faiths are not simply accepted but fully integrated into the worshipping life of the school is confirmation of the large contribution which collective worship makes to community cohesion.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good. The progress of pupils is monitored closely but especially by means of tests at the end of each module. The monitoring is used as means for progress and is evidence that at all key stages the achievements and standards of each pupil are in line with or exceed expectation. Much work has been done in developing the system for monitoring. In all key stages, progress and achievement is in line with ability. At the end of Key Stage 4, all pupils now take the Salford Diocesan Certificate in Religious Studies. In 2008 all passed, the majority with a merit. The progress of pupils is assisted by the good quality teaching and by the friendly atmosphere in lessons. This atmosphere is conducive to learning and is helped even further by the good and co-operative relationships between pupils aided by the well organised and enthusiastic support staff. The school is most anxious to support the work of many charities. Generous donations are made to the Diocesan Rescue Society and CAFOD but there is involvement with other charities such as Francis House, Cornerstone, Jeans for Genes and the Handicapped Children’s Pilgrimage Trust. There is also a Lourdes group. This involvement often includes visits to and from the charities concerned. Because of the active and meaningful manner in which charities are supported, the whole process makes a significant contribution towards community cohesion as well as the social and cultural development of pupils.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspector agrees with the school that the quality of teaching and learning in curriculum Religious Education is outstanding. This is because lessons are exceptionally well planned and they are taught with confidence and determination. The planning makes full recognition of the individual needs of pupils but underlying the modification there is a drive to ensure that pupils make progress. As a result pupils respond well. The atmosphere in lessons is very friendly, purposeful and appropriately demanding with great awareness of each pupil's individual needs and abilities. Excellent and confident use is made of information communication technology. There is constant monitoring and recording of pupils' progress and this system accords with that of the school. Marking includes very positive comments. Pupils enjoy their lessons because they see them as relevant to their needs. Pupils have good standards of behaviour which enhance the work done in lessons and there are good standards of co-operation. There is a very high standard of display work: much of it being the pupils' own work in which they take great pride. Teaching is further enhanced by good provision of books and equipment. Display work in the public areas of the school is also meaningful and of a very high quality.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Overall the quality of the Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. This is because the national and Salford Diocesan syllabus is fully implemented and has been fully adapted throughout the school. The curriculum co-ordinator for Religious Education has completed a comprehensive review but it is still being bedded in. The syllabus enables pupils to study a wide range of Catholic issues and beliefs. Lessons observed during inspection included those dealing with the miracles of Jesus, the Kingdom of Heaven, the work of priests and prayer. The latter provided many opportunities for personal and group prayer within the context of drama, music and art resulting in many powerful and moving moments. The directive from the bishops of England and Wales that 10% of curriculum time be given to Religious Education is not fully observed in the formal time allocated to Religious Education but within the context of a great deal of cross-curricular work the time target is reached. Whilst the delivery of the curriculum has been adapted to answer the needs of the pupils the content has not been diluted. The Catholic faith and its moral teachings are fully covered. The success of the delivery is thanks to the determination, commitment and co-operation of the teachers. There is recognition of other Christian denominations and world faiths. Strong links with many other departments are a feature of the school and this is seen especially in relation to the worshipping life of the school. The department makes a major input to the personal, health, social and citizen education programme resulting in a similar and significant contribution to the pupils' moral, cultural and spiritual development. In this way the curriculum supports the school's contribution to community cohesion.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are outstanding. This is because the priority given to Religious Education and its competent delivery stands out in the daily life and functioning of the school. The all pervading family atmosphere stems from this commitment which is shared by senior management, governors and the Religious Education co-ordinator. The department is robustly line managed by the headteacher. The subject co-ordinator has clear ideas, gives dynamic and determined leadership, and has a clear vision for the subject's future development. This is exemplified in the department's development plan which is very much in line with the school's overall policies. The provision of high-quality technology is an indication of management's desire for quality provision. The technology itself is well used and the department is well resourced. There is an excellent standard of documentation including lesson planning, suggested teaching aids and excellent record keeping. The commonality of purpose and cohesive management are strong features. The governors are kept aware of the work of the department and they are very active, supportive and encouraging. They have a link governor for Religious Education and Catholicity. The chairman in particular is very well informed and enthusiastic about the religious life and education of the school.