

**INSPECTION REPORT**

Inspection date	July 2013
Reporting Inspector	Mrs Margaret Dolan
Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 200	
Type of School	Catholic Primary
URN	119647
Age range of pupils	5-11
Number on roll	77
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mr Ian Nugent
Headteacher	Mrs Judith Metcalfe
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Mrs Debbie Newton
Date of previous inspection	February 2008

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades  1 = Outstanding  2 = Good  3=Requires Improvement  4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The quality of the Word of God community	2	
The quality of the Welcome community	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	2	
The quality of Witness	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

**CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL**

St Mary's is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary School within the diocese of Salford. St Mary's is much smaller than the average primary school having 77 pupils on roll. There are three mixed age classes: Class 1 – foundation, Y1, Y2; Class 2 – Y3, Y4; Class 3 – Y5, Y6. 96% of the children are baptised Roman Catholic. The school population is predominantly White British and all the pupils have English as their first language. The socio-economic background of the majority of pupils is advantaged although 6.5% of the children are entitled to free school meals. 8% of the children have special Educational Needs and one child has additional support for complex needs. Children enter school broadly in line with the national average and trends show that they leave the school with attainments above national averages.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Mary's is a good school with outstanding features and is an inspirational example of God's word and work. The children enjoy coming to school and everyone feels welcome in the community. The school regards itself as a family and relationships are built on love and trust. Older children care really well for younger ones and children from different age groups work happily together on learning partner projects. Families and members of the local community are welcome to join the school for special assemblies, prayer liturgies and Masses. Inspirational leadership at all levels, a very supportive and committed team of governors and a very strong partnership with parents and parishioners, help St Mary's to achieve an environment where individuals are heard and valued. Overall standards of attainment are consistently good and results are above national averages. Standards of teaching are of high quality and children in the school with additional needs, are well cared for and supported by dedicated classroom assistants and support staff. Work is well planned and delivered and dance, drama and song are used to enhance lessons. Lessons seen during inspection were mostly good with some outstanding examples. Work in Religious Education is monitored and assessed regularly and results are recorded in the Religious Education assessment file. Staff bear witness to their own faith and are excellent role models.

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

- Catholic life, relationships and care for all within the school is outstanding
- Leadership is inspirational at all levels and is outstanding
- The strong links with the parents and families is outstanding

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

The school is led by a dedicated and inspirational headteacher with the help of very competent teachers and teaching assistants and supported by a very willing and committed governing body. The Parish Priest is a much loved and very welcome visitor to the school. He is well known to the children who are keen to engage him in discussions. The headteacher and staff lead by example and the love of God is central to all they do. The spiritual and prayer life of the school is excellent. It is at the heart of the curriculum and is often integrated into other curricular areas. An example of this was guided reading in Class 1 where a bible story was explored to develop aspects of character. The leadership and staff of the school actively seek innovative and exciting ways to enrich the experiences of the children both in local and global initiatives. Strong links have been made with local schools and the school has developed partnerships in Ireland and France as well as working with a school in Kenya on the Solomon Project. Each day begins with prayer both in the whole school assemblies and in classroom based prayer and worship. Themes are based on the liturgical cycle, inspiration people or as a response to topical events. The Sacramental Programme is parish based and is supported by school staff and governors. Governors are regular visitors to the school and work in a systematic way both supporting and challenging the progress of the school.

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

St Mary's School place the word of God at the centre of all they do. The Religious Education curriculum is based on the diocesan guidelines and is uniquely grounded in the school's own values and vision. Overall attainment is good and children leave the school with results well above national standards. The skill based curriculum is based on 'The Way, The Truth and The Life,' and lessons are generally good with some outstanding examples. Learning is fun and dance, drama and song are used to bring the curriculum to life. During inspection a very good lesson with children in Class 1 was based on a visit to church the previous week. They considered the beginnings of the church and compared this with how they behaved with their friends. The older children wrote about members of the church and the younger group began a collage of themselves and other people who they would see in church. During an excellent lesson in Class 3 children were considering some of the ways that we can serve God. They planned an advertisement based on the role of disciples in the future. The task was very challenging but the children worked really well together and were able to discuss what message they would want to pass on to others and how this could be developed. The children were very proud of the work in their books and very attractive displays around the school also showcased the depth and very good standards of their work. Good use is made of resources and different editions of the bible reflecting the age and abilities of the children were used in different classes. Well differentiated lessons ensure that teaching and learning in Religious Education is mostly good with outstanding examples and often better than the very good standards achieved in literacy. Work is monitored regularly by the Religious Education coordinator and examples of assessment are included in the well organised coordinators file. Levels of achievement are also updated termly and kept in this file. The Religious Education coordinator and the link governor regularly discuss the development of Religious Education and they are planning to devise a more formal system of reporting back next term. The teaching of World Religions is enhanced by visitors brought into school to talk to the children and visits to places of interest including the Jewish Museum.

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

St Mary's is a very welcoming school providing an environment where children, parents and other members of the community can be heard and valued. New families are welcomed with warmth by creating opportunities for them to visit the school and meet the staff. Parents and carers are invited to attend assemblies and Mass with the children and school productions are always well supported. There are regular meetings with parents to keep them informed of their child's progress in school and staff are always willing to talk to parents informally if they have any concerns. Weekly newsletters keep parents informed about what is happening in school and there is also a very good school website. Behaviour both in the classrooms and around school is exemplary. Pupils are very well mannered and they are keen to make visitors feel welcome. They are very proud of their school and form very strong bonds of friendship with children of different ages as well as their peers. As one child commented, "It's just like one big, happy family." Older children look after and care for the younger ones. Each reception child is allocated a 'buddy', to help them make the transition from pre-school to St Mary's, and pupils throughout the school have a 'learning partner' who they work with weekly on projects. Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities are treated with love and tenderness by the other pupils and these shows in both the enjoyment and achievement of all the pupils. Partnerships have also been formed with local schools and staff and pupils meet regularly throughout the year. Some pupils meet each half term to discuss literature or to take part in maths activities and every summer a joint walk and picnic is arranged to give the children the opportunity to socialise. Liaison with the high school is very good and pupils are well prepared for transition. The school choir is active in the community and sing at an inter school event each year. The school has also developed links in France and Ireland and have been involved with helping children in Kenya through the Solomon Project. The School Council meet weekly and take their responsibilities seriously reporting back to the headteacher any concerns or ideas for the development of the school.

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

St Mary's school is a very caring community where everyone is valued. The outstanding behaviour of the children and the high levels of respect and care for others underpins the well being of all. The teachers and

support staff know the pupils and their families really well forming trusting relationships which are at the heart of the daily life of the school. Pupils with differing needs are well catered for and there are excellent systems for support and intervention in place. This is also shown by the exceptional way the children care for each other and the pleasure they derive from the achievements of their classmates. This was seen during inspection when the children were delighted to be able to sign a song to help another child in their class. Through the buddy system and the work with their learning partners children form friendships as they move through the school. This also means that bullying is virtually unheard of. If fall outs happen a calm and supportive stance is taken by staff so that friendships are healed and deepened. The children also reach out beyond school with their kindness as was seen in the £350 raised by the children through a mini fun afternoon for the Solomon Project in Kenya. The children see the world as God's creation and care for the environment and themselves very well. They have achieved Healthy Schools status and regularly participate in environmental and fitness initiatives. Pupils feel safe and enjoy going to school. They have good relationships with their teachers and would be happy to tell a member of staff if they had a problem, confident that it would be dealt with sympathetically. There are a variety of after school clubs meeting the needs and interests of all the children.

### **THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS GOOD**

There are many opportunities for the children to develop their prayer life including Masses, shared with the parishioners, collective worship and assemblies. Key events in the school year are celebrated with Mass. There are daily acts of collective worship and whole school assemblies take place on most days. During inspection the excellent assembly was about St Peter and St Paul. Year 3 children had painted rocks with the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. They recalled that the name Peter means rock and they partnered this with St Paul's list of gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. The rocks will be displayed in the very peaceful outdoor prayer garden. Class 1 children had used their guided reading time to read the story of 'The Rich Farmer.' They considered words that described his character and will use these words to begin their Friday writing session. At the end of the lesson the prayer leaders led the children in singing 'He's got the Whole World in his Hands.' Displays in the classrooms are very good and each classroom has a prayer focus area with relevant artefacts relating to Religious Education topics and the liturgical year. Children learn the traditional prayers of the church but they also compose their own prayers and record these in their prayer diaries. Hymns and singing are introduced to enhance the quality of worship and religious displays around the school stimulate prayer opportunities, to reflect beliefs and reinforce values at the centre of school life. The pre-school welcome meeting begins with the celebration of Mass to welcome new parents into the worshipping life of the school.

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

Through the example of the very committed staff, St Mary's is a very active Catholic, spiritual community. The school regards itself as a family and relationships are built on love and trust. Children strive under the guidance of committed adults and there is a very strong sense of teamwork between all members of the school community. The mission statement is known by all at an appropriate level and God really is at the heart of all they try to achieve. There is a calm, welcoming atmosphere in the classrooms and children enjoy coming to school. Teachers are good role models and the mostly good and sometimes outstanding lessons seen during inspection enhance all aspects of Religious Education. Children were confident and were able to question and challenge thinking as was seen during the Class 3 lesson on Christian discipleship. Behaviour is excellent and pupils are good examples of young Christians. The school is very proud that of the small number of children they send to the high school, the head boy and a 4 out of the 6 prefects are ex St Mary's pupils. Staff foster a spirit of awe and wonder and the children have a clear understanding of the mystery and beauty of God's world. They have undertaken projects to enhance their immediate environment but are also aware of global responsibilities. The children raise money for local and international charities including The Thomas Centre, CAFOD and Caritas. During Lent, on their own initiative, the children planned and prepared a mini fun afternoon to raise money for the Solomon Project. The children have a highly defined sense of fairness and justice and they know their responsibilities in terms of equal opportunities, stewardship and reconciliation. It is clear that the school is a witness of Christ's love.

## **AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- To develop a pupil chaplaincy team to enhance the already strong religious commitments of the school
- to strengthen the links between the Religious Education coordinator and the Religious Education governor by writing a short report on the developments in the religious life of the school
- To improve the already good teaching and learning within the school by including challenging activities appropriate to the abilities of the children



**Department for Formation, Office for Education**

### **Summary report for parents**

On July 1<sup>st</sup> 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 be accessed via both the school website and the education section of the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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**Department for Formation, Office for Education**

Dear Children,

Thank you for your special welcome when I came to visit your school. Your school is very good and this is because you and your teachers always work really hard and always try to do your best. You are very lucky to have such a lovely school and I know you are proud of it's history. The displays you had created around the school were excellent and full of lots of interesting things.

I was really impressed by the way you behaved and the way you care for one another. Your school really is just like, 'one big, happy family.' It was good to see how you were all such good friends and were able to work and play happily together. I enjoyed your Religious Education lessons and your books were beautifully presented. Your School Council is very good and they are helping you to develop lots of areas in your school. I especially liked your Prayer Garden.

Thank you once again for making me feel so welcome and I hope you have a lovely summer break.

God bless you all,

Yours sincerely

Mrs Margaret Dolan  
Section 48 Inspector