



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

BLACKBROOK ST MARYS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ST HELENS

Inspection Date 23 April 2013

Inspectors Mrs Marie Connolly
Mrs Meg Buckley Mr Michael Halford

Unique Reference Number 104802

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

Type of School Catholic Primary

Age range of pupils 4-11

Number on roll 407

Chair of Governors Mr Peter Alcock

Headteacher Mrs Julia Ashton

School address Chain Lane
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Date of last inspection 21 June 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about this school

- Blackbrook St Mary's is a larger than average sized Catholic Primary School situated in Blackbrook, St Helens serving the parish St Mary Immaculate.
- There are 407 children on roll of whom 251 are baptised Catholic, 58 come from other Christian denominations, and 1 from the Buddhist religious tradition. 97 have no religious affiliation.
- There are 18 full time (and 1 part time) teachers of whom 15 teach Religious Education. Currently 9 have a suitable qualification in Religious Education and a further 5 are in the process of completing *The Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies*. Seventeen teachers are baptised Catholic.
- The same headteacher has remained in post since the last inspection. In the last year a new Religious Education team has been created to lead and manage the subject.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Overall effectiveness:

Blackbrook St Mary's is an outstanding school in providing Catholic Education.

Inspection Judgements

The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.

- The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.
- Pupils know and understand the school's Mission Statement and understand the part they play within it. They are regularly involved in its evaluation. A full Mission week took place at the end of last term when each year group took to heart the messages of the mission and after discussion artistically depicted this for display around the school. This is an excellent reminder to all on a daily basis. Assemblies and Collective Worship regularly reflect the values of the mission statement.
- Pupils have a tremendous sense of belonging to the school community and value and respect others. A tree of 'recognition' affirms this.
- Pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility in the school and wider community e.g. activity leaders, Foundation stage buddies, Year 6 leadership team etc.
- Pupils are actively involved in developing the Catholic character of the school by having planning and delivering Collective Worship, membership of pupil conferences, involvement in charity work etc.
- Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 benefit from participation in away days and retreat activities that encompass body, mind and spirit. Opportunities for team-building, co-operation, spirituality and care are developed. The school intends to extend this lower down the school.
- Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong and apply this in their personal relationships. They take an increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions.
- Education for pastoral care and personal relationships has fostered positive attitudes in pupils. This is a real strength of the school. The pastoral team have wonderful systems in place for thorough and sound help and assistance for pupils and their families as well as outside agencies where necessary.
- They praise and acknowledge the contribution of others. They show a readiness to embrace and celebrate their lived experiences.
- Pupils embrace opportunities to meet their potential in all aspects of school life.
- Staff and pupils are involved in service to the local faith and religious communities e.g. the Harvest and Easter celebrations, 'Wednesday Club', 'Stay and Pray' the Blackbrook Community Nativity and also reach out to the wider community. They show respect and understanding of other faiths and religions which is excellent as the school has a diverse intake.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Pupils' achievements and enjoyment in Religious Education is outstanding.
- Their attainment in Religious Education is good.
- They make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities.
- On entry to school many children have a very limited knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith. A significant number are not from a faith background.
- There is no difference in performance between pupils of different gender.

- Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are outstanding. Excellent differentiation and support of pupils from additional staff is in place.
- Analysis of assessments undertaken provides evidence of pupils generally attaining appropriate level for their age and stage of development in each key stage.
- Pupils are becoming increasingly more religiously literate. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developing appropriate to their age or capacity. Assessment and tracking indicates that this is improving gradually.
- They are developing the skills that enable them to reflect spiritually, think ethically and theologically and are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. They are becoming more confident in expressing their views.
- Pupils' engagement in and enjoyment of their learning is outstanding as shown by their interest, enthusiasm and behaviour.
- Pupils are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively and do so well.
- Pupils are anxious to learn and improve their knowledge, understanding and skills as they become independent learners.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

- Pupils' response to and participation in Collective Worship is outstanding.
- They show interest, respond well and actively participate in Collective Worship.
- They act with reverence and are keen to participate in a variety of gatherings and a range of ways.
- Pupils' knowledge of prayer and liturgy is increasing. They become familiar with a variety of prayer styles. They pray sincerely and movingly.
- They appreciate and are open to the Word of God in the scriptures.
- They sing joyfully, reflect in silence and join in community prayers appropriately and with confidence. They respond with actions and through dance most creatively.
- They are becoming increasingly more confident preparing and leading worship from their earliest years and do so with great enthusiasm.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education is outstanding.
- It is consistently effective in ensuring that pupils are interested and engaged and make outstanding progress. This has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Teachers display good subject knowledge and deploy a wide range of teaching styles to motivate and inspire pupils.
- Teaching encourages pupils' enjoyment of and enthusiasm of Religious Education.
- Teachers take into account pupils' prior learning and ensure differentiated tasks when planning so that the work consolidates, builds and extends their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively. Good use is made of time and excellent resources including other adults and Information Communication Technology to maximise learning.
- Pupils are informed of their progress and how to improve both orally and through marking. This is undertaken by each class teacher and the Headteacher. They are given opportunities to discuss their work and how to improve. Effort and achievement are celebrated regularly.
- The assessment of pupils work in Religious Education is outstanding.
- The school has excellent assessment strategies which provide accurate and detailed information on the achievement of all the pupils.

- Teachers are able to identify how well pupils are achieving and tackle underachievement.
- Teachers enable pupils to evaluate their own work well.

The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils' learning

- The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils' learning is outstanding.
- The curriculum is outstanding in meeting pupils' needs.
- The school, using the *Come and See* programme recommended by the Archdiocese, meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. Appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets National and Archdiocesan requirements. The Religious Education team and teachers are adapting planning as their experience of the programme develops.
- Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales.
- Planning ensures full coverage of the Religious Education programme. Imaginative and well planned strategies are deployed to enrich pupils' learning.
- The school implements new curriculum developments thoroughly as appropriate.
- Enrichment activities such as role play, art, drama, use of ICT, music and other cross curricular links have a positive impact on the curriculum.
- The Religious Education curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral development and vocation.
- The curriculum is customised to meet the needs of groups and individuals.
- Children have explored the beliefs and values of other faiths and religions. This helps to promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently. The school has benefitted from students from a local University supporting this as well as a visiting speaker. The school plans to develop this further by visiting places of worship for a variety of religious traditions.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding. It reflects the Catholic character of the school and takes into account the variety of faith backgrounds among the pupils.
- Collective Worship has a high profile and is central to the life of the school.
- Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils. Opportunities are provided to enable full, active and conscious participation of the whole school community.
- Children are enabled to pray formally and informally using a variety of prayer methods and styles. The school provides opportunities for staff to develop the skills in planning, leading and evaluating Collective Worship. Monitoring of Collective Worship identifies areas of strength and development.
- The teachers provide the necessary resources and opportunities to help children to develop the skills necessary to plan, lead and participate in Collective Worship and to evaluate it effectively.
- Opportunities are provided for parents, carers the local and wider faith communities to participate in a variety of celebrations of the *Come and See* programme and the Church's liturgical year. The school regularly invites parents to 'stay and pray'. This is well received.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in promoting monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic life of the school and in the way they plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.
- This is reflected in the school's own Mission Statement. All who form part of the school community including parents, clergy, governors and children were involved in the development and review of the Mission Statement its vision and core values. Its aims and practical objectives direct and guide every aspect of school life and are a useful tool by which the school evaluates its effectiveness.
- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in the way they use monitoring data to evaluate the schools performance, celebrate, and plan future improvements.
- Outstanding opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in Catholic life and Mission of the school e.g. during the Mission week this year children were given the opportunity to reflect on their Mission and the core values that underpin it. Each year group then used different ways of depicting this artistically e.g. printing tee-shirts, photographs, collage etc These are displayed all around the school and serve as a constant reminder to all of the school's Mission and vision. They know, own and live out their Mission Statement beautifully.
- The Self Evaluation Document provides evidence of the schools monitoring, searching analysis and self challenge.
- Their analysis provides a basis to celebrate the school's strengths and outlining areas for development. The Self-Evaluation Document was very honest in outlining the considerable progress since the last inspection. The school was also very modest in its grading. In all but one area the inspectors judged the school better than the school. All were outstanding. The experience of Catholic life for the whole school community and the teachers witness to it is exemplary.
- The school provides excellent induction and in-service training to enable staff to further understand the Church's Mission in Education and play their unique part in it e.g. an excellent handbook has been produced, teachers planning and workbooks are monitored weekly by the Religious Education team and feedback given immediately individually and at staff meetings when common areas need to be identified for celebration or development. A rolling programme is in place for staff to attend in-service provided by The Department for Christian Education as well as specific training for newly qualified teachers. The quality of Collective Worship is a priority for the school. It is effectively monitored and evaluated by leaders, governors and managers. An up to date policy is in place.
- Innumerable opportunities for spiritual and moral developments are provided for staff and pupils such as use of 'Come and See for Yourself, outdoor prayer areas, beautiful displays and objects of beauty around the school enable all to appreciate their worth and nurture their self-esteem . The headteacher and deputy also attend Spirituality courses to deepen and nurture their own spirituality. This is a considerable strength of the school.
- Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all.
- Prayer, worship and the liturgical life of the school reflects and respects the wide religious diversity within the school beautifully.
- There are positive relationships at every level within the school. Every person knows they are valued and the part they play in school is regularly affirmed.
- Parents are consulted regularly and involved in a variety of ways in the life of the school e.g. through newsletters, meetings and questionnaires.
- Governors are excellent in fulfilling their responsibilities. They have effectively helped to shape the direction of the school through review of the Mission Statement, rigorous

monitoring and evaluation, regular involvement in the day to day life of the school and development of the Improvement plan. The governor for Religious Education has attended training. Along with the leadership team they check timetabling and spending.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Religious Education of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in promoting monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Religious Education of the school and in the way they plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.
- Monitoring data is used most effectively to evaluate the schools performance and plan for future improvements.
- There is a robust programme for the monitoring and evaluation cycle.
- Teaching and learning is monitored regularly and appropriate feedback and support given as necessary. Good practice is shared and celebrated.
- Continuing professional development opportunities are provided for all.
- Assessment information is collated and tracked by the subject leaders and headteacher and shared with governors and parents.
- Formal assessment tasks are undertaken in line with Archdiocesan guidance.
- The subject leaders, supported by the headteacher are outstanding in guiding Religious Education. They show real commitment and creativity introducing new initiatives promptly when appropriate. Excellent documentation guides and directs all staff in the delivery of the subject. This is updated as necessary.
- The Self Evaluation Document is rigorous in identifying targets, timescales and lines of accountability. This is updated as soon as new areas for development are identified.
- Curriculum outlines are provided for parents who are consulted on different issues depending on the topic being covered.
- Achievement and effort are celebrated in a multitude of ways. This is a real characteristic of the school and helps to explain the wonderful caring and happy family atmosphere permeating the school.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

- Continue to celebrate, share and consolidate the outstanding practice.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	1
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OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	2
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education	1
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	1

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders, governors and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, Grade 2 good, Grade 3 requires improvement and Grade 4 inadequate
