

**INSPECTION REPORT**

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**GUARDIAN ANGELS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL  
LEIGH LANE ELTON BURY BL8 2RH**

Inspection date 18<sup>th</sup> October 2011

Reporting Inspector Mrs A. Lubomski, Mrs C. Page

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

Type of School	Catholic Primary
URN	105334
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Mrs J Kernaghan
Headteacher	Mr J D Harrison
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Mrs D O'Boyle
Date of previous inspection	January 2008

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades  1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
Spirituality	Statement	
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	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- Guardian Angels is a Voluntary Aided RC Primary school in the diocese of Salford.
- It serves the parish of Our Lady of Good Counsel and Guardian Angels.
- Pupils are 3-11 years arranged in single age classes, with virtually 100% baptised Catholics.
- The school enjoys strong links with their sister school Our Lady of Lourdes.
- The school recently reviewed its Mission Statement and prides itself on providing an excellent Catholic education for the children who attend there.
- A strong Christian ethos prevails in all parts of school life.
- 83.3% of the teachers are Catholic, 8 hold the Catholic Teachers' qualification or equivalent.
- There are 237 on roll including 30 part time nursery class.
- The FSM benchmark group is in the second category on Raise on line.
- The social context of the school is wide and varied, covering 5 electoral wards.
- Nearly all parents work.
- The catchment area is typical of a town school with a mixed range of property.
- The pupil population is very stable with most children staying throughout the school age range, and they transfer to St Gabriel's R.C. High school exclusively, despite private provision available locally.
- There are a few children with English as a second language or an additional language.
- There are approximately 16% with SEN and 1 child with a statement. The school employs a consultant SENCo to lead their provision for SEN which is a significant strength of the school. The school has a tradition of welcoming and supporting children with SEN, some with very challenging needs.
- The children's ability is broadly average on entry and represents the full ability range, although below the LA average according to the LA Foundation stage profile. Documentation indicates it has been consistently at this level for some years.
- The local area of the school is predominantly terraced housing and light industry.
- Only a few children are from high status professional backgrounds but there is fairly high employment, particularly in services and commerce.
- The school sits close to the national average for the index of Multiple Deprivation. (Point 16 where the national average is 19).
- Level of attendance is very high at 96.1 % in 2010 and has been consistent for many years.
- Only one child has been excluded in the last 10 years.
- The staffing is also very stable. All staff have been here for at least 3 years.
- The after school club is signposted to an outside provider which the school has a special relationship with.
- There are many popular and very successful extra curricula activities. The partnership of these aspects has led to a developing role for the extended school service.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

Guardian Angels is an outstanding Catholic school. It is very successful in offering its learners a traditional Catholic education in a friendly and supportive environment where differences and diversity are welcomed and celebrated. The whole school community, very well supported by the parish priest, ensure the pastoral and spiritual needs of the learners and their families are fully met resulting in excellent home, school and parish links. The school is firmly at the heart of the parish it serves. Positive relationships are evident throughout the whole school community. With the inspired leadership of the Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team and the hard working staff, the school has created an ethos where everyone recognises the need to work together as an "extended family" showing love and concern for all members. Learners enjoy coming to school and work hard to achieve the high expectations of the teachers. They are friendly, polite and welcoming and their behaviour at all times is exemplary. Collective worship is a strength of the school. The school offers its learners a wide variety of opportunities to develop their talents. The school is very successful in developing the spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness of its learners. The school very successfully realizes the aims of its Mission Statement by helping every child reach their full potential as a child of God in a school day which is full of learning, fun and friendship.

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

The school has fully met the improvements recommended by the previous Section 48 inspection.

The school's self-evaluation is detailed, honest and accurate. The governing body and dedicated head teacher, fully supported by his staff, share a clear vision for the future development of this outstanding school. They have the knowledge, commitment and enthusiasm to realise this vision.

### **What the school are to do to improve further**

The school should continue to offer a quality Catholic education to its learners by implementing the priorities identified in its School Improvement Plan.

### **SPIRITUALITY IN GUARDIAN ANGELS RC PRIMARY**

Guardian Angels a safe, secure and welcoming school. Children and adults know that they belong as part of the community steeped in God's love. Adults, led by the hard-working, inspirational headteacher, supported by an involved Parish Priest, set a tremendous example to the children through their daily life in school. Children have a secure sense of the love of Christ and respect each other. Children are eager to express their feelings, their knowledge and demonstrate a high sense of morality and responsibility. Whilst presenting themselves as lively, inquisitive personalities eager to learn, the children have a sense of attentiveness, stillness and prayerful silence. Children are joyful at their own achievements and those of others. They extend the love of Christ to the wider world. In this school nothing is seen as an unsolvable problem, all is achieved through the love of Christ.

### **THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD COMMUNITY is outstanding because:**

- The Mission Statement is contemporary and regularly revisited. It is known, lived and witnessed to throughout the school and is clearly evident at every level of the school, throughout the policies and procedures and has a significant impact on learning and the life of the school.
- The Religious Education of the pupils is the core of the Core Curriculum. The staffing and resourcing devoted to RE is of the highest standard, reflecting its significance and importance in the school. Standards equal or better those of Literacy at all Key Stages including Foundation Stage.
- The pupils are inspired by exceptional teaching across the school. They are challenged to engage with the Big Questions of the purpose and meaning of life throughout the curriculum.
- Scripture is clearly known, understood and made relevant throughout the school. The staff and pupils demonstrate and can articulate the centrality and importance of the Word of God.
- Religious literacy is developed to a very high level for all the pupils.
- The home, school and parish links are innovative, inclusive, creative and effective. Pupils are actively trained in outreach to the local community.

### **The Inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgements:**

- The standards of RE attainment, progress and achievement were outstanding in all lessons observed. The curriculum is based on the school's mission and is challenging, interesting and fulfilling and child-centred. This results in the children having the knowledge and skills to access the central underpinning objectives of the RE curriculum.
- The RE curriculum has been adapted to meet the needs of the children in Guardian Angels and the school, led by their able Curriculum Leader, look forward to incorporating The Way, The Truth and the Life throughout the coming year.
- Standards of teaching in the lessons observed were consistently of the highest quality. Children are encouraged to think, challenge and question. The inspectors witnessed mature and thoughtful discussions and deliberations held by children showing their deep understanding.

- The curriculum is enriched by the very high quality of drama and music evidenced in the worship observed .
- Pupils have a lot of pride in their work. In Year 6 the children write prayers to recite as a class on a daily basis. The school is teaching the children the new Mass format.
- Displays are of the highest standard and show the depth and the standards of the work of the children of which the school has the right to be very proud.
- The RE curriculum is further enriched by the excellent work evident for example in the creative use of ICT observed in Year 3. Visits are planned by staff to enrich the curriculum further.

**THE QUALITY OF THE WELCOME COMMUNITY is outstanding because:**

- There is a culture of welcome and all the pupils and staff demonstrate a very high level of confidence and outreach to all within the school community.
- Visitors are welcomed with love and respectful care. The importance of the dignity of the individual is clearly evident at all levels. Clear structures and procedures are followed by all staff and pupils who consistently witness to Christ being at the heart of the community through excellent communication, relationships and a joyful, holistic approach to daily life.
- All members of the school community demonstrate a very high level of belonging and ownership of the school. Pupils are given a high level of responsibility in creating and sustaining the school's sense of welcome.

**The Inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgements:**

- During a Year 5 assembly, an impressive number of families and other visitors were warmly welcomed by the staff and children. Members of the families were held in awe as children's heroes.
- There is a rota for classes to attend Mass in Guardian Angels Church. The celebrations of Holy Days and Feast Days are significant feature of the school.
- The regularly updated website provides a wealth of information keeping parents and parish up to date with school life.
- Children are encouraged to share their work with the Parish. For example, Year 5 are displaying posters in the church to encourage donations for The Good Life Orphanage.
- The school invites parents and community to nativity plays, pantomimes and Easter services.
- The school works with St. John with St. Mark C of E school sharing friendship and cultural exchange.
- Members of the parish and the local community feel the Welcome of the school as they share in its life by helping in classes.
- The school enjoys strong links with Inscape House, in Year 4 there was a display demonstrating the close relationship.
- In assemblies and in lessons the children sing with energy and joy.
- The school has developed links with a school in Datong, China, the headteacher recently visited Guardian Angels.
- The Inspection team experienced a sincere welcome from every member of the school community. There is an atmosphere where relationships are exemplary. Older children care beautifully for the younger ones. Prayer partners in Y6 and Y3 share the sacramental journey and offer support and friendship. Playground buddies ensure playtimes are fun and peaceful.
- Children, staff and parents clearly feel an integral part of the school family. The Inspection team felt privileged to be part of that family for a day.
- Strong relationships between staff ensure that movement between classes and to High school provide the children with the tools and knowledge so that they feel well prepared for the next step.

### **THE QUALITY OF THE WELFARE COMMUNITY is outstanding because:**

- The staff and pupils demonstrate a very high level of respect, care and service to others.
- The structures and procedures ensure that all pupils and staff feel safe and are treated with respect and dignity.
- The Christ-centred ethos is loving, creative, highly positive and fosters understanding, empathy, forgiveness and respect for diversity.
- All pupils and staff feel safe and free to express their opinions and know that these will be valued. Importance and recognition is given equally to all. Pupil voice is appropriately represented at Governors' and SLT meetings.
- The budget, staffing and resourcing decisions demonstrate a consistent commitment to Christian stewardship throughout the school.
- The parents and friends play a highly significant part in school life and their contributions are valued throughout the school.

### **The Inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgements:**

- Through a variety of ways the school supports the lives of each person through spoken and written prayer. For example, Year 6 operate a 'Prayer Factor'!
- The School Council affirmed that this is a very caring community where everyone is valued! "There is no need to be worried, there is always someone to help you in school."
- Prayer partners and prefects look after and care for younger children. They encourage and pray for each other. The children explained that any incidents of bullying are immediately dealt with by the caring, compassionate staff. In Year 1 the children were asked to relate their play to that of Jesus as a child. There was a discussion about how Jesus may have fallen out with his friends and the children were able to explain what he should have done to make up with his friends again. During the day the Inspectors noted that there were no instances of poor behaviour. Playtimes, despite the rain, were happy events.
- Play time buddies lead play sessions and encourage friendships.
- Maturity and self responsibility are strongly encouraged to build independence. The School Council were very confident in their analysis of the wonderful school of which they feel central.
- The school reaches out to God's world through their charity work. Support is given to the Good Life Orphanage and Francis House. Children feel that their voices are heard when charities are chosen. Community cohesion is outstanding.
- The children feel very safe. This is due to every member of the school community providing a happy atmosphere which is free from worry.
- After the death of an ex pupil, the school has led the development of the Children and Loss project with all Bury Catholic schools. This has produced an excellent scheme from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 3. It is called 'Walk with Me' and it prepares all children for the inevitable and varied experiences of loss that occur in everyone's lives.
- Children with more extreme needs for support can access counselling within school and by external services. The internal support is a particular strength, replicating many areas of our school's mission statement. Designated adults establish special caring roles for some children in emotional literacy programmes or family support.
- The mission is continued after school with a host of excellent clubs that are extremely varied hence meeting the needs and interests of many.
- The children see the world as God's world and care for the environment and themselves very well. The school has Healthy school status, it is involved with environmental projects, has installed fitness trails and produced a hydration policy. Lunchtime is a very positive for all the children.
- Outstanding respectful behaviour was evident throughout the inspection.

**THE QUALITY OF THE WORSHIP COMMUNITY is outstanding because:**

- All of the pupils and staff are confident and skilled in planning and leading prayer and worship which is pupil-centred, creative, inclusive and relevant.
- There is a systematic and developmental prayer programme across the whole school which incorporates a wide range of traditions and ensures that prayer is age-appropriate, inclusive and relevant. All the staff are trained and supported in the formation and education of the prayer life of the school.
- A high level of creativity is evident in the worship, liturgies and celebrations, engaging all pupils and staff.
- The school actively prepares pupils to take a leadership role in engaging with families and parishes in prayer and worship.
- All the staff have access to a high level of dedicated funding and resourcing in order to develop prayer and worship.

**The Inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgements:**

- The children and staff regularly celebrate the Mass in school and in Church. These celebrations are shared with parents, parish and the sister school OLOL. Key events have special masses; the beginning of each school year, parish and school feast days, the new year, Holy Days and end of the year.
- During Advent, Lent and the Easter season assemblies, para-liturgies and times of reflection/reconciliation are all shared by the whole school community.
- There is a daily act of collective worship. These take place in a variety of formats and are thought provoking, uplifting experiences as witnessed by the Year 5 assembly about 'Heroes'.
- Children pray in classes, small groups and individually with great reverence, respect and thought. Children in the Nursery confidently made the Sign of the Cross and recited the Morning Prayer. Each class has a child-friendly Prayer focus, and the school grounds with the outdoor prayer area are attractive and ideal for quiet reflection. The children know many school prayers and compose powerful prayers for themselves. This was evident in numerous attractive displays.
- Older children support the faith journey of the younger children as prayer partners and prefects.
- The children have excellent listening skills and can apply their learning into day to day life.
- The parish Priest joins the Y6 children as they attend the annual retreat with OLOL Y6 to prepare spiritually for High School.
- The children demonstrated to the inspectors a good awareness of the Liturgical year.
- Different opportunities arise to stimulate personal prayer e.g. Post a prayer, the prayer tree etc.
- Hymns and enthusiastic singing enhance the quality and enjoyment of their prayer.

**THE QUALITY OF THE WITNESS COMMUNITY is outstanding because:**

- The staff and pupils feel confident and secure in their witness to Christ, the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. Pupils are confident in witnessing to the beliefs and values of a Christian community and are actively encouraged and supported in being pro-active citizens who participate in the decision-making processes at a local and national level.
- An explicit Catholic culture permeates the whole of school and is clearly identifiable through relationships, decision-making and actions.
- The school's chaplaincy is well-resourced, relevant and wholly inclusive with a high impact on the life of the school.

- The Gospel values are clearly evidenced throughout all the policies and procedures and have a significant impact on learning and the life of the school.
- The staff clearly demonstrate and witness to justice, compassion, reconciliation, love and forgiveness in their relationships and teaching at all levels throughout the school.

**The Inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgements:**

- The school's mission statement is integral. It is known and understood by all at their level. It is in 'child speak', but is powerful in its ambition. It is discussed and shared in assemblies, in class and in RE lessons.
- Relationships are excellent at Guardian Angels and a strong sense of teamwork and belonging exist as discussed with the RE Leader. The staff are friends and have been together a long time.
- The school regards itself as a family, and relationships are built on love and trust as expressed by a Governor. In Year 2 children discussed with the inspector differences in families and how their family members help them to develop.
- There is a calm welcoming atmosphere. Both adults and children contribute to this.
- The school fosters a spirit of awe and wonder both through RE and the broader curriculum. Children have a clear understanding of the beauty and mystery of God's world. In the Nursery children were composing their own prayers to display on a Prayer tree. The school are currently collecting socks to be sent to the Good Life Orphanage and see this and other projects as their duty as members of a global society.
- The children demonstrated to the inspectors that they have a highly defined sense of fairness and justice. They know their responsibilities in terms of equal opportunities, stewardship and reconciliation.
- Behaviour is excellent and they are fine examples of young Christians in school. Children in the Reception class willingly shared their toys at playtime. No child was seen to be left out. Children ensured that everyone had a friend.
- The children thrive under the guidance of profoundly committed adults who share a deep passion for the school and all it offers. The Head was described by the children as "another dad" who always has time to listen.
- The children feel a part of a long and rich history. Guardian Angels was opened in 1887 and has log books going back many years. The Governors described a recent event where past pupils who are now pensioners viewed the school log books and found themselves mentioned and recognised themselves in photographs. They spoke warmly of their time at the school.