

INSPECTION REPORT

School: St Antony's RC Primary School
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Headteacher: Mrs Elaine Grimshaw
Chair of Governors: Mr Nick Kennedy

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Salford
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Date of inspection: October 2011
Date of previous inspection: June 2010
Reporting Inspector: Mrs M Dolan

Information about the school

St Antony's is a voluntary-aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parish of the Holy Family in Blackburn. The closure of Christ the King and St Antony's church, which was situated next to the school, has caused a period of change and adaptation. The current churches in the parish, of St Teresa and St Joseph, are both over a mile away however the school and parish work together to prepare the children for the Sacramental Programme and the Crossroads programme.

The school is situated in an urban area and 94% of pupils are from families in the bottom 20% of the index of multiple deprivation. The age range of the pupils is from 3-11. The standard admission number is 30 and there are currently 250 pupils on role. There are 125 baptised Catholic children in the school including nursery but significantly 80% of the children in the reception class are baptised Catholic. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is over twice the national average. 15% of the children are from minority ethnic backgrounds and there are 50 children with special educational needs including 5 with statutory statements of special educational need or who have been assessed at school action plus.

There are 12 teaching staff of whom 6 (50%) are Catholic and 6 teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies or equivalent.

Overall Effectiveness

Grade 3

St Antony's is a satisfactory school with many good aspects where pupils feel safe and cared for and parents are welcome. The behaviour of the children in classrooms and around the school is exemplary and the staff are excellent role models and form good relationships with the pupils and parents.

St Antony's is proud of the prayer life of the school and the children are given many opportunities to celebrate Mass, take part in liturgies and to learn reflective and private prayer. Provision for Religious Education is well monitored by the Religious Education coordinator and staff and pupils are well supported in their spiritual development. The headteacher ensures that the development at St Antony's School is not only about academic success but is also about developing the whole child for their future place in society.

Capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 2

Following the last Section 48 inspection in June 2010, the Executive Head Teacher has been made permanent headteacher, an assistant headteacher has been employed and a new deputy headteacher has taken up post since September. A new governing body will be in place from January to replace the Interim Executive Board who have been supporting the school for the last year. The school's self evaluation is good and the strong senior leadership team are well aware of the strengths of the school and the areas for development.

Strategies for the monitoring of teaching and learning are in place and policies have been reviewed and revised. Monitoring and evaluation has been developed and staff are responsible for the teaching of religious Education with their own classes.

Links with the parish and local community are good and the school hopes to develop this further to enhance the opportunities for community cohesion with the diverse cultural groups in the area.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- 1. Ensure challenging work is provided especially for high achieving pupils.**
- 2. Continue to develop community cohesion to include other religions and cultures.**
- 3. Continue to develop monitoring and evaluation.**

PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups

Grade 3

Attainment on entry to the school is below average but pupils make satisfactory progress and there are signs of significant improvement. Attainment in Religious Education is satisfactory with the majority of children achieving results relevant to their age. Special Needs pupils are well supported by hard working and competent support staff and intervention strategies are in place to enhance their education. Leadership qualities are developed in the older children through the School Council and the 'buddies' system where children from Year 6 have partners in Year 1 and help them to feel secure and happy in the school environment. Older pupils also take on the role of play leaders and join the younger children on the playground helping them to develop friendship groups whilst introducing new games and activities.

The Sacramental Programme is organised through the parish and the school is supportive of this work. The new parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school and Masses and liturgies are prepared throughout the year. Assemblies are based on the liturgical year and the Rosary and other prayer sessions are introduced in the appropriate seasons. Each Friday morning before school, staff are invited to a reflective prayer session led by the Religious Education coordinator and this helps the staff to develop their own spiritual life and is an excellent example for the children. Children are aware of the needs of others and give regularly and willingly to help those less fortunate. Money collected at a recent Harvest assembly was sent to CAFOD and the children also collect for the diocesan charity, Caritas, which helps both children and adults in need. Coffee mornings for the Macmillan Nurses Trust have become a regular feature in school and as well as raising money this gives parents the opportunity to meet together and feel a part of the school community.

Prayer and worship takes place daily either in assembly or classroom situations. During inspection an act of collective worship in year 3 explored how precious the ability to be able to see is. The children sat quietly around a focal display and thought about the things that they would miss if they were blind. The children said a thank you prayer for their sight and placed pictures around the display, of things they would miss if they could not see including their families, rainbows and the beautiful things in nature. The children were very thoughtful and reverent in their prayers. A whole school assembly recalled the Joyful mysteries of the Rosary. Teachers and children from Year 6 related the stories from each mystery and they also sang hymns joyfully to Our Lady. A high point for the children was when the headteacher was blindfolded to see how Simeon may have felt when Jesus was presented at the temple.

Each Friday the school has achievement assembly when awards are presented and good work and behaviour is celebrated. As well as house points, best class and sports awards, two children from each class are chosen as star pupils. A special treat for these children is for them to have 'tea' with the headteacher in her office as a reward for their achievement.

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

Grade 2

The quality of the provision for Religious Education is good. Learners make good progress and the work in the children's books is generally good. Teachers have positive relationships with the pupils which generates interest and respect. The support of the very competent Religious Education coordinator for staff and pupils is much valued and her commitment to the spiritual development within the school is obvious. Differentiation is evident in written tasks and activities although some of the tasks could have been more challenging. A variety of well differentiated activities was seen in a very good lesson in Year 1 about why Noah built an Ark. After a brief recap the children arranged the sequence of Noah's story together through pictures and then they asked questions about his journey of a pupil who pretended to be Noah. Activities included painting a rainbow, arranging and colouring a booklet and free writing of the story of the ark. In a lesson in Year 3 about Baptism, children discussed what a promise was and how we could put things right if a promise is broken. Children in groups wrote their own sorry prayers, made a promise to show how to follow Jesus and a group prepared a role play about broken promises. Children in year 4 followed up their work on finding references in the bible with matching quotations with meanings and deciding which of the quotations made them feel happy. Children who need help are well supported by dedicated teaching assistants.

There are good strategies in place for monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education and the Religious Education coordinator ensures that pupil's work is assessed regularly and the tracking of pupil's levels are kept up to date. The religions and cultures from other parts of the world are taught but would be improved by a more organised approach and this would also help with the school's development of community cohesion. 10% of curriculum time is allocated to Religious Education as is required by national and diocesan guidelines and the school has now introduced the new diocesan syllabus, The Way, the Truth and the Life. There are Religious Education resources in each classroom and there is also a central resource to augment classroom artefacts and books. There are religious displays around the school and each classroom has a prayer focus area with relevant, seasonal arrangements and children's work lovingly displayed.

Good use is made of technology through interactive whiteboards and the use of music CD's to enhance worship. The school is also fortunate to have members of staff who play instruments to accompany classroom and whole school liturgies. There are a number of children from other faiths and these have been successfully integrated into the life of the school. Parents are aware that their children can be withdrawn from Religious Education and collective worship but no requests have been made.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School

Grade 2

St Antony's is well led by a committed and enthusiastic headteacher, ably supported by her senior management team and staff. Leadership and management of Religious Education is good and shows signs of further development. The parish priest, who is a governor of the school, is able to witness the school's Catholic ethos and its religious, spiritual and moral focus. A new governing body is being formed in January and this will include members of the Interim Executive Board which will provide continuity for the school and the ability to progress even further.

The headteacher's reports to governors includes a section on the religious life of the school and Religious Education forms a part of the school improvement plan. Staff attend training organised by the diocese in Religious Education and are fully aware of the new syllabus which has been introduced throughout the school. The school is at present introducing the new Mass responses to the children through assemblies and classroom practice and these have recently been used in the school Mass to encourage familiarity. When new staff are appointed, the Religious Education coordinator ensures that induction takes place to ensure confidence and continuity in the religious life of the school.

Parents are informed of the life of the school through regular newsletters and parents workshops to explain changes in the curriculum. Regular coffee mornings help new parents to become involved in school life and the parent and toddler group is also a way new families to the area feel welcomed. There is also well organised provision for children before and after school for those parents who need this facility. The Friends of St Antony's organise events throughout the year and these have included Easter Egg Bingo and a Potato Pie Supper.