



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

School: **St. Mary Magdalene's RC Primary School**

Address: **Wellfield Drive, Burnley**

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URN: **119489**

Headteacher: **Mrs. Julie Frazer**

Chair of Governors: **Father Michael Haworth**

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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

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Date of inspection: **17<sup>th</sup> November 2011**  
Date of previous inspection: **May 2009**  
Reporting Inspector: **Mrs. Pauline Leatherbarrow**

## **Information about the school**

St. Mary Magdalene's is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of St. Mary Magdalene. The school shares a site with Wellfield Anglican and Methodist school. The school is situated in the middle of a housing estate with good quality housing but also serves an area that has some low levels of deprivation.

The age range of learners is 4-11 years and the indicative admission number is 30. There are 201 children on roll of whom 180 (90%) are baptised Catholics. The number of learners eligible for free school meals is 16 (8%). The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs is 14 (7%) – 2 of these have a statement of special educational needs. There are 7.5 teachers with 7 full-time Catholic teachers. Two teachers hold CCRS and 1 currently studying for CCRS.

## **Overall Effectiveness**

**Grade 1**

St. Mary Magdalene's is an outstanding Catholic school. It is highly effective and successful in offering its pupils a Catholic education delivered through a rich and vibrant curriculum. The school very ably fulfils its role in passing forward the traditions, beliefs, rites of passage and teachings of the Catholic church.

The school is very welcoming to all. Pupils state that they enjoy coming to school and they work hard to meet the high expectations of staff. Pupil's behaviour is excellent. Relationships throughout the whole school community are strong, based on mutual respect for all and the love of God. The well being of every pupil lies at the heart of everything the school tries to do and all staff show utmost commitment to and involvement in caring for each individual pupil.

The high quality input of the parish priest into the daily, spiritual life of the school is appreciated by pupils, staff and parents. This is evidenced by class visits, class and whole school Mass in school and at church. In addition, the parish priest, parishioners and staff took 21 pupils on a pilgrimage to Lourdes. Collective worship and music as evidenced during a Mass during the inspection by the whole school and school choir is a great strength of the school.

The head teacher gives excellent leadership to her hard working and dedicated staff. They work together supported by the Governing Body as a team with a clear vision to ensure all pupils grow and mature in their learning and love of God.

## **Capacity for sustained improvement**

**Grade 1**

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding. St. Mary Magdalene's has improved rapidly over the past two years. The head teacher, deputy head teacher, RE subject leader and governors have a clear overview of the school's strengths and areas for development based on sound evaluation procedures. Robust monitoring including data analysis, internal tracking, lesson observations, work scrutinies and interventions fully indicate that the school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement. The staff operate as a cohesive and committed and motivated team striving for constant school improvement.

### **What the school needs to do to improve further?**

There are no issues to address. The school has clearly identified areas for future development in their School Development Plan.

## **PUPILS**

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

**Grade 1**

The school has a strong Catholic ethos and a welcoming family atmosphere. Pupil's artwork makes a very positive contribution to the school's religious education. High quality displays are evident in class rooms and around school covering curriculum RE and other themes including an excellent display in the hall based on Remembrance Day.

Teachers plan for both 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' curriculum and the Liturgical year. The school is moving towards a 'creative curriculum' and some aspects of RE are included within this. Attainment in RE is consistently good at the end of both key stages. At the end of Key stage 2 - 52% of children attained higher than expected in RE, 44% in line with expectations and 4% (1 pupil) below expectations. Differentiation was evident at both key stages as evidenced during lesson observations and book scrutiny. Marking indicated where children might improve on their work.

Pupils are able to talk about their faith using appropriate religious language relative to their age and ability. Younger pupils have a very good knowledge of the events of Jesus' early life and are able to discuss and describe what they might see in church.

Pupils demonstrate a high level of respect and were observed to engage well in collective worship during inspection. Children are involved in the preparation of their class liturgies and Mass. They choose hymns, write prayers and plan offertory gifts with the class teacher. RE lessons leading up to Mass are given over to this preparation time. Class Masses are often directly linked with curriculum RE. Pupils are confident and enthusiastic in leading prayer and worship.

Behaviour both in and out of class is exemplary. Children are polite and well mannered. There is ample evidence of praise and reward in lessons observed and which is also celebrated at Friday Achievement Assembly.

Lessons observed were graded as good with several being outstanding. Teacher's planning is consistently good. The SMT monitors the curriculum by both formal and informal lesson observations, work scrutinies, discussion with staff and children. ICT is used effectively.

Older pupils are given ample opportunities to hold responsibilities. The school has established a 'Seeds and Gardeners' programme where older pupils are paired with Foundation pupils to encourage younger pupils to grow confidently in the life of the school. They support the younger children on the playground and are paired together when walking to church. There is also a Play time Leader system where older pupils can volunteer to be a play leader for younger children. The school council are involved in decision making and take responsibility for some aspects of fund raising activities in school. They have also recently begun to report their activities and their role to the Governing Body.

## **How effective the provision is for Catholic Education?**

**Grade 1**

Prayer is central to the life of the school and plays a key part of every school celebration. St. Mary Magdalene's school makes excellent provision for the spiritual needs of its pupils. Throughout the school year it provides a range of rich and meaningful opportunities for pupils, parents and staff to develop and strengthen their relationship with God, for example the Passion play performed for the parish and music sampled during inspection.

Whole school and class Masses are held in school and at church when pupils take a full and active role in planning, music, readings and prayers, which are a strong feature of celebrations.

The school provides excellent support for the Sacramental Programme. The RE co-ordinator is the chief catechist who closely liaises with the parish priest and parish. Home, school, parish links are excellent, with parish events taking place in the school in the absence of a parish hall.

There is tremendous support provided by the parish priest in working with the staff to ensure a child centred approach to liturgy are a feature of provision. The school is using The Way, the Truth and the Life and RE meets both national and diocesan requirements.

Tasks are set which meet the needs of all learners. Lesson plans clearly identify the opportunities for assessment which are integral to teaching. Learning objectives are made clear to learners at the start of each lesson observed. Resources are very good and are carefully selected and prepared to enhance the learning process. A range of teaching strategies are used including ICT.

Learners have very good attitudes to learning, they ask sensible questions to clarify points and they listen attentively. Good work is recognised and praised. Evaluation of the provision is detailed and regularly reviewed by the

head teacher and RE co-ordinator and parish priest. This ensures that the overall provision is continually developing. The school has regularly reviewed policies for curriculum RE and Prayer and Worship signed by the parish priest - chair of governors.

## **LEADERS AND MANAGERS**

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

**Grade 1**

Leaders and managers promote the Catholic life of the school very effectively because the ultimate concern is to develop the distinctive role of a Catholic school. Every class room has a focal point for prayer with a balance of high quality child centred and adult initiated displays both in class and throughout school which reflects the Liturgical year.

Documentation provided by the RE co-ordinator is of a high standard. The head teacher and RE subject leader complete regular planning and work scrutinies, lesson observations and walk-throughs to ensure that a full and informed picture of standards can be gained and improvements strategically planned for. The head teacher is well supported by the deputy head, and along with a hard working team of teachers, are committed to the church's mission in education. They understand and encourage staff pupils and parents to reflect on diocesan guidelines through the Wednesday Word and regular newsletter specifically related to curriculum RE.

Self evaluation at all levels is rigorous in its searching analysis and self challenge (School Development Plan). All staff share the school's mission and are actively involved in shaping and supporting it. For example through active involvement in the Sacramental programme.

The RE Governor has a good understanding of RE within the school and is very aware of the school strengths and areas for development. The RE Governor reviews sections of the RE Section 48 SEF with the head teacher alongside the School Development Plan. Governors ensure that financial resources are allocated effectively and support the Catholic life of the school with both the chair and vice-chair accompanying pupils on school trips including a pilgrimage to Lourdes. The parish priest is a regular and familiar visitor in school and works with the RE subject leader and class teachers to ensure that the children are well prepared for collective worship and play an active role within school Masses.

The SMT engage effectively with parents pupils and staff through regular newsletter, the school website and texting service and are used to disseminate the results and outcomes of consultations. The school works well with outside agencies and with other local Catholic schools for the benefit of all children in the community. These events include; shared Masses, regular meetings and shared INSET.