

**INSPECTION REPORT**

**Guardian Angels RC Primary School, Leigh Lane, Elton, Bury BL8 2RH**

Inspection date: 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016

Reporting Inspectors: Brendan Hennessy  
 Mark Mountcastle

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

Type of School	Primary
URN	105334
Age range of pupils	3 - 11
Number on roll	251
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Julie Kernaghan
Headteacher	Dennis Harrison
Religious Education Subject Leader	Anne Dorey
Date of previous inspection	November 2011

<b>The Inspection judgements are:</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Explanation of the Grades</b>  1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The quality of the Word	1	
The quality of the Welcome	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 AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL**

Guardian Angels' Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School serves the parish of Guardian Angels, Bury. This is an average sized primary school with 251 pupils on roll, of which 99% are baptised Roman Catholic. The school is situated close to the town centre in an area of mixed housing; 10% of pupils are currently entitled to free school meals. On entry to nursery, the attainment of the majority of pupils is broadly in line with the national average. Most pupils have made good or better progress in their learning by the time they leave at the end of KS2. The school currently has 5% of the pupils with special educational needs and 10% with English as an additional language. There are 14 teachers in the school, all of whom are Catholic, 7 hold or have started the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. School signposts before and after school provision to a quality local provider for those children who need it. The school holds a number of national awards. The school is a National Support School and the headteacher is a National Leader of Education.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING**

Guardian Angels is an outstanding Catholic primary school, where making Jesus known and loved is at the centre of everything it does. Prayer and worship is very much at the heart of this school, enriching everyone's experience of God's presence and enhancing their individual faith journeys. The strong Catholic ethos that is so evident throughout the school has helped to create a vibrant and inclusive community where the happy, confident children thrive as they learn, play and pray together. The mission statement is visible, understood and lived by all in the school family. The inspirational headteacher, supported by a talented leadership team, a dedicated RE subject leader and enthusiastic staff, do all they can to ensure that the spiritual and pastoral needs of all are met. Staff share a vision of living the faith as they strive every day to live out the Gospel values that so clearly underpin school life. The parish priest and governors are very supportive and committed to ensuring that Catholic education of the highest standard is provided for all. The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is of the highest standard across the whole school, as evidenced in the lesson observations, children's books and work around school. The friendly, polite and well-mannered children are very proud of their school; their behaviour and attitude to learning is excellent. School takes every opportunity to build on the excellent links with the parish and home. Parents feel very welcome, included and valued. They state that school 'has a real family feel....is a real parish and school community' and that their children are very happy and enthusiastic about all that they do in school. Effective monitoring, assessment and evaluation of religious education has ensured that the school has continued to develop since the last inspection.

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

- The outstanding witness and confidence of the children in expressing their beliefs, coupled with their enthusiasm, aspiration, exceptional behaviour and excellent attitude to learning.
- The spiritual leadership of the inspirational headteacher, who leads by example. He is very well supported by a dedicated leadership team, committed RE subject leader, enthusiastic staff team and experienced governors.
- Prayer is at the heart of this school and the children demonstrate a high level of confidence and skill in leading prayer and worship.
- The commitment of the entire staff team to work together and live out the school's mission in every aspect of school life.

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

Leadership and management of Guardian Angels' RC Primary School is outstanding. The inspirational headteacher, ably supported by outstanding senior leaders and a very knowledgeable governing body, is dedicated to the continual improvement of the school. It is without doubt an outstanding Catholic school delivering a real Catholic education to the community it serves. The head's vision, passion for Catholic

education and drive ensures that school leaders have helped to create a family school, empowering all stakeholders to take ownership. During a meeting with governors, the sense of family was emphasised continually, along with deep spirituality and love. The governors talk of the leadership creating an openness and a culture of accepting challenge to assist in the continual improvement of their school. There is a joint sense of purpose with all leaders and governors, who are deeply immersed in their community that has the school at its heart. There are many initiatives within the parish. The partnership between school and church is seamless. Governors share and mirror the passion of the headteacher which ensures the school really does become a beacon for education in this part of Bury. The headteacher, with great success, steps out of Guardian Angels, providing quality support to other Catholic schools in the Diocese. Procedures and accountability at all levels ensure that in his absence the school continues to improve and is positively enriched by the experiences. This not only ensures the school's continual improvement, but to share their expertise is a real credit to the school community. Pupil leadership is well established through the school council and pupil voice is prioritised in so many areas of school life. Staff, children and governors all have a voice in planning for future development. Continuing professional development for staff, combined with rigorous, honest and accurate self-evaluation, has made a positive impact on the quality of provision in RE. It has also ensured that the leadership team is clear about the strengths of the school and what needs to be done to develop even further. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education was found to be outstanding and permeates all aspects of school life.

### **THE QUALITY OF THE WORD IS OUTSTANDING**

Guardian Angels school family places the Word of God at the centre of all that it does. The school has succeeded in 'creating an RE curriculum that is based on thoughtful spirituality and is uniquely grounded in our own school's mission'. The mission statement is at the heart of the school; it is understood, lived and witnessed by all in the school family. The significance of the Word of God was clearly demonstrated throughout the school in many creative, enriching and thoughtful displays. High standards are consistently achieved across the school, as evidenced in the children's books, in their contributions to lessons and work displayed around school. The children are rightly very proud of their RE books and displays. The quality of teaching and learning in RE is of the highest standard, with creative and inspiring lessons that engaged and challenged the children's learning evident across the whole school. These lessons included many common attributes; thorough teacher knowledge and understanding of RE, clear evidence of consistently high expectations, challenge, good pace, engaging learning and practical concepts, which helped the children's understanding of RE. Thoughtful and effective questioning challenged the children and moved the learning on. Constructive marking and feedback was evident; this helps the children to improve their work and enables them to reflect on their learning and understanding. All of this ensured that learning was productive and the children were secure in expressing their thoughts. Dance, drama and song help to bring RE alive. Teaching Assistants have a very good understanding of the teaching of RE and they effectively interacted with pupils to support their learning and pastoral needs. Scripture is a real strength of the school. It is known and understood by pupils and shared in many vibrant, joyful ways. Teachers model religious language and use a developing vocabulary of religious terms. The children have an excellent attitude to learning and were happy and confident to share their understanding of their faith. They learn about world faiths through religious education, assemblies, global links, visits and visitors. This helps them to understand and respect the beliefs and cultures of others. Parents state that school provides the children with many wide ranging opportunities to excel in RE and that children are extremely happy and enthusiastic about all that they do in school.

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

From the school gates, the welcome at Guardian Angels is truly outstanding. The school is extremely successful at creating a calm, friendly and family atmosphere. There is a very strong ethos of family and welcome, which is proudly shared by the governors and is evident throughout the school. Throughout the school the children and staff welcome everyone with a huge smile and warm greeting. The children are so polite and well behaved and rightly proud of their school. Relationships throughout are very strong, warm and deep rooted in mutual respect. Children talk fondly of their prayer partners, even though some are now well into high school, and they remember how they were helped, cared for and loved by their friends. Children love coming to school and readily support and help each other. Their sense of ownership and responsibility for what happens in their school is outstanding and they revel in their role showing visitors around the school. The children are confident, feel safe and know their contributions are valued. Their contributions in assembly and collective

worship showed how natural they are sharing their feelings, thoughts and prayer with the community. Clear procedures and events are in place to ensure new families are welcomed into school. Many parents talk of the very strong pastoral care offered to all families, particularly in times of need and support. Parents, parishioners and friends are very supportive; they play a highly significant part in school life and their contributions are greatly valued.

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

Guardian Angels is a truly inclusive school that provides a very caring and supportive environment for everyone associated with the school. The strong Christ-centred ethos, based on love and respect for all, is central to all aspects of school life. It clearly reflects the deeply embedded mission of the school and Gospel values are witnessed and flourish throughout the school. Guardian Angels school is absolutely committed to the spiritual, physical and emotional health and well-being of all who learn and work within the school. This is without doubt a very caring community where everyone is valued. There is clear evidence of excellent relationships between staff, parents and children. Staff and children do their best to follow the example of Jesus and clearly demonstrate respect, love and compassion for each other. Procedures to safeguard and protect are given the highest priority. There is a genuine concern from staff for the welfare of all pupils. The older children speak with great enthusiasm about their role in supporting and caring for the younger children, as prefects, playground buddies and prayer partners. The school encourages self-responsibility and is successful in developing independent learners equipped with the knowledge and skills to make good choices. Children with additional needs are extremely well supported in school, learning support plans are child centred and the school works closely with external agencies to support individuals who need extra provision. Behaviour is exemplary in the classrooms and around the school and the children were adamant that there is no bullying. The school gives a high priority to those in greatest need in the way that they reach out beyond the school community. The compassionate and caring ethos is evident in the number of charities supported by the school, often initiated by the children and not least through the wonderful support for The Good Life Orphanage in Kenya. It was uplifting to see the children from the orphanage in a video link at the Y6 assembly. Children, staff and parents work co-operatively to ensure that the welfare of each person and the wider community is fostered throughout the school family.

### **THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING**

Prayer is at the heart of this school as it actively seeks to explore many ways of deepening the relationships of all the school family with God and each other, to become a true worshipping community. This was clearly evident in the high quality acts of worship observed; the Y6 school assembly, Y5 Prayer Service for All Souls and the Y4 classroom act of worship and reflective meditation. All were, without exception, prayerful, inspiring, uplifting, creative and thought provoking spiritual experiences for all present. These special moments of prayer and reflection were very well respected by the children and enhanced their relationship with God and one another. The children prepare and lead weekly prayer services, which contribute to and enhance the prayer life of the school. The older children are prayer partners for the younger children, supporting their faith journey. Contemporary and traditional music, dance, drama and IT are used creatively to enhance the quality of prayer and worship. The children pray together as a school, in classes, small groups and individually, with great reverence and respect. They are comfortable with their feelings and confident to write and share their own prayers; many examples were seen all around school. The children are particularly proud and respectful of their Prayer Journals. Each classroom has an age appropriate and relevant focal point for prayer, these are clearly valued by the children. The Y6 pupils are all leaders of prayer and worship in school and they make a significant contribution to the enhancement of prayer and worship and are excellent role models for all. The parish priest regularly visits the school and is actively involved in supporting the staff and children to deepen their own faith and understanding. Parents were very positive about the range of opportunities the school offers for prayer and worship. They praised the support given during the sacramental programme, the school assemblies, prayer partners' initiative and the children's prayer journals.

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

Guardian Angels school community recognise that God is at the heart of the school and clearly demonstrates outstanding witness to the church's mission in education; it does all it can to meet the challenges involved in this

witness. The school mission statement is a powerful declaration of how all in the school family give witness to the beliefs and values of the Catholic faith in their daily lives. RE is at the core of the school curriculum. It is the foundation block that allows the children to develop their sense of identity and how they can have a positive impact for good on the local, national and global community. Relationships between all members of the school community are excellent and all are able to talk openly and confidently about their faith. Observations and discussions confirmed that children treat each other with care, respect, compassion and dignity. All staff are positive role models for the children; they promote the ethos and values of the school helping the children to recognise that Jesus is with them in all aspects of school life. There is a great sense of teamwork, belonging and celebration of success at all levels among the staff, children and parents. This gives the school its true family feel and helps the children to become well rounded individuals. There are strong home, school and parish links which are enriched by the regular visits of the parish priest. The school fosters a spirit of awe and wonder through RE and the broader curriculum. The children know that they have a vital role to play in looking after God's world. They are encouraged to reach out to those in need through their support for local, national and world charities. The children have a well-defined sense of fairness and justice. It is clear that the children put the welfare of others at the heart of what they do. The children do indeed 'thrive under the guidance of profoundly committed adults who share a deep passion for the school and all that it offers'.

**AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

- Continue to develop assessment and marking in order to include the children more in their learning journey.

2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016

Dear Children,

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us and for making our visit to Guardian Angels' RC Primary School such a joyful and uplifting occasion. We really enjoyed our time with you. Everyone in school is indeed inspired by Jesus and you all work so hard to always do your best, and because of this your school is an outstanding Catholic school. You showed us in so many ways that you really do live out your school mantra, 'Once an angel always an angel'.

It was lovely to see so many happy, smiling faces. You are clearly very proud of your school and all that you have achieved together. We were also very impressed by the way you all want to succeed in school and how well you look out for each other. You were all extremely well behaved and your politeness and manners were exceptional.

We really enjoyed seeing your lessons and learning about all the wonderful things you do in Guardian Angels. It was clear to us that you have an excellent knowledge and understanding of our Catholic faith and that you all really try your best in all of your lessons. We were very impressed with the high standard of work in your RE books, your contributions in the lessons we saw and in your wonderful displays around school. Thank you for sharing your work with us.

It was so pleasing to see how attentive and confident you were in the classroom act of prayer and worship, the amazing assembly and the prayer service we saw. They were all inspirational and every one of you showed great respect and reverence. Your behaviour was excellent, your singing was fantastic and your prayers were uplifting. The Y6 children are great leaders and teachers as they set such a wonderful example for you all to follow.

The staff, school governors and your parents are extremely proud of you and of what you have achieved over the years. Well done and keep it up!

Your teachers are keen to work with you to build the Catholic life of your school even further so that you can all continue to grow as leaders of our faith in school.

God bless you all and enjoy the rest of the school year.

Mr Brendan Hennessy and Mr Mark Mountcastle  
(Section 48 Inspectors)

## **Summary Report to Parents**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016 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 also be accessed via both the school website and the Education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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