

INSPECTION REPORT

Holy Souls RC Primary School
Wilworth Crescent, Pleckgate, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB1 8QN

Inspection date 16th July 2013

Reporting Inspectors Mrs Jackie McNally

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

Type of School	Catholic Primary
URN	119517
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	210
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Miss Margaret Wells
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Davies
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Mrs Christine Davies
Date of previous inspection	April 2008

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The quality of the Word of God community	2	
The quality of the Welcome community	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	2	
The quality of Witness	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

Holy Souls Catholic Primary School is an average-sized primary school which serves the home parish of Holy Souls and the families of Good Shepherd and Sacred Heart parishes on the outskirts of Blackburn. There are 210 pupils on roll, the majority of whom are white British. The most significant faith group is Roman Catholic but the school extends a welcome to children of other faiths and 25% of the school's population is Muslim. The number of children entitled to free school meals is below the national average at 8% and the percentage of children on the additional needs register is 8% which is below the national average. The school has a committed staff and 83% of the teachers are Catholic.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Holy Souls is a good Catholic school with many outstanding features. The Headteacher and governors lead the school with a clear vision and they are supported in their mission by a dedicated staff. A calm, positive, welcoming atmosphere permeates every aspect of the school and the uniqueness of every child is clearly valued and nurtured. Children's behaviour is outstanding; they demonstrate confidence and enthusiasm and at all times during the inspection the children were a credit to the school and their parents. The school mission statement, imaginatively illustrated in the school flower, is central to whole ethos of the school and is shared by the whole school community. The governors, staff, parents and children all see themselves as belonging to a family and this a strength of the school. There are outstanding parish links and parents and children praised Fr. Knowles' commitment to the school and his ability to engage children during school masses.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The ethos, relationships, behaviour and care for all within the school is outstanding.
- The mission statement which is shared by the whole school family underpins the Catholic life of the school.
- The Catholic leadership at all levels is outstanding and the staff, governors and parents share a common vision for the school which places the child at the centre.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The quality of Catholic Leadership at all levels is Outstanding. The leadership of the school clearly recognises that Christ is central to all aspects of school life and all staff are committed to creating a loving and nurturing learning environment for the children. The school successfully fulfils its mission to develop the potential of each individual by valuing their uniqueness and celebrating their talents. The mission of the Catholic Church in school is a priority and this is clearly evident. Governors of the school are well informed on the Catholic life of the school through the Headteacher's reports and they also take a full and active role in the daily life of the school. The Headteacher and governors place a strong emphasis on the development of the religious life of the school, and as such, the School Development Plan always includes an area for development which focuses on religious education. The Parish Priest makes a significant contribution to the Catholic life of the school.

Pupil leadership has been developed through the School Council and Eco Club. Pupils are confident and enthusiastic about taking on responsibilities and they were able to talk about how they supported each other and people in the wider community. Pupils and parents were particularly enthusiastic about the buddy system in which a Year 6 child supports a child in the Little Pearls class in the first year of school. Children are given many opportunities to care for those less fortunate than themselves and give generously to charities such as CAFOD and St. Joseph's Penny. In order to develop their leadership skills further the children now need to be provided with the skills to take a more proactive role in the organisation of collective worship and other liturgical events.

The self-evaluation of the religious life of the school is rigorous and the senior leadership team have accurately identified many of the strengths of the school as well as the areas for development. The Headteacher monitors plans, books and teaching annually and provides feedback to the staff. Staff training is shared with other Catholic schools within Blackburn with Darwen and every two years the school join together for an INSET day.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS GOOD

Teachers and teaching assistants are enthusiastic and committed to teaching RE and demonstrate a secure knowledge of the religious curriculum. Lessons are based on the scheme, 'The Way, The Truth and The Life', and teachers are using the guidance from the medium term and weekly plans from the scheme and adapting the lessons appropriately for the topic being taught. The lessons observed show the children have a good knowledge of Religious Education, as well as knowing what it means to follow Jesus. Levels of attainment and pupil knowledge are outstanding in Upper Key Stage 1, due to inspirational teaching, high expectations and the provision of engaging activities. In order to develop teaching further, differentiation needs to be incorporated into the planning and older pupils need to be provided with opportunities to extend their learning further through individual and group research. Children have a good awareness of cultural differences and other world faith traditions and during the lessons observed children were invited to explore the similarities and differences between their different faiths. Inter-faith days, together with organised visits and visitors enrich children's experiences and give the children first hand experiences of other faiths. In all classes the children produced work of a good quality, shared their views and listened to each other with respect and interest. In every class support staff are use effectively to support children and promote further learning.

Various samples of children's work from across the school were looked at during the inspection. Work set was at an appropriate level of pupil development and standards were broadly similar to those of literacy. Links were being made with the Church's liturgical year and the Sacramental Programme. The senior leadership team agrees that they now need to develop differentiation further as there was limited evidence of differentiation in the pupil books. All books were marked but in order to further develop marking, children need to be provided with comments which invite them to explore their faith further or provide them with next steps in their learning. Behaviour for learning throughout the school is outstanding. Pupils are clearly enthusiastic and keen to learn. Pupils clearly enjoy talking about their faith background and felt at ease doing so.

The Headteacher, staff, Governing Body and Parish Priest have worked well together to enable the school to develop a vision about how RE should be taught in the school. Links between home and school are strong and the parents, governors and children are proud to be part of Holy Souls.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

There is a positive, welcoming culture which permeates the whole school and this is clearly demonstrated by the staff, governors and children. Children's behaviour is outstanding and relationships between children and staff are strong, bearing witness to the statement on the school flower – 'Love one another as I have loved you'. The school has worked hard to establish excellent relationships between the parents, governors, parish, staff and children and this is a strength of the school. All members of the school community are proud of their school and it is clear from discussions with governors, parents and children that they feel they are valued members of the school family. As a result of the strong Catholic ethos the children show respect and consideration for each other and the importance of the dignity of the individual is clearly evident.

Parents are regularly invited to school masses and other events which enables them to feel that they play an integral role in the spiritual and academic life of their child. The Headteacher would however like to provide opportunities for parents to be more actively involved in the celebration of the Word of God. Children of other faiths are welcomed into the school and their faith traditions are not only respected but it is clear from lessons that the school recognises, values and celebrates diversity. Children from other faiths are invited to

discuss and share the similarities and differences in their faith within lessons. Pupils are given a high level of responsibility in creating and sustaining the school's sense of welcome. The welcome extended to new children through the buddy system is outstanding and helps younger children to settle into school quickly and this system is valued by the parents.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

Staff and children demonstrate a very high level of care and respect for others. The school ethos fosters a culture where children feel confident enough to express their views and share their experiences, knowing that others in the class will value and respect them. The children spoke about how much they enjoyed school and how much they liked their teachers and friends. Children have a clear understanding of procedures for addressing any unkind behaviour and they feel that they can share their worries with school staff. The Year 6 pupils undertake a nurturing and supportive role when looking after the younger children and pupils clearly enjoy this responsibility. Parents praised this buddy system and said the excellent relationships formed between the Reception and Year 6 buddies often continued not only throughout the school but for many years afterwards.

The school's mission statement, imaginatively represented by a school flower, encapsulates the whole school commitment to providing children with the opportunities to grow spiritually, academically and personally. Governors and staff frequently referred to the school flower and it is clear that elements of the flower are central to everyday school life. There is a genuine concern from all staff for the welfare of all pupils and every individual child is valued and nurtured.

Children learn that it is important to help others, particularly those less fortunate and they take an active role in the organisation of fund raising events. The school supports local, national and worldwide causes such as CAFOD, Caritas, the International Shoebox Appeal and the Annual Poppy appeal. Members of the school council are enthusiastic about their responsibilities and feel that their opinions and suggestions are valued by the school. The school would now like to investigate ways in which pupils can make a positive difference towards the stewardship of creation through the creation of a new wildlife area in the school grounds.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS GOOD

Prayer and worship form a central part of school life and all members of the school community gather together to celebrate collective worship during assemblies and school masses. Collective worship makes a good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of learners. In each classroom there is a focal point for worship and during the day there are a range of prayer opportunities for children. The children are encouraged to write their own prayers and these are recorded in the class prayer book.

Parents say that they enjoy having the opportunity to be part of the worshipping community during school masses and assemblies. The staff, children and parents all commented upon the excellent support provided by Fr. Peter Knowles who is a regular visitor to the school.

The school assembly included opportunities for the children to pray silently, praise God through song and to pray together. Throughout the assembly the children were attentive and reverent in their behaviour. The class based collective worship observed was of a high quality and provided the children with the opportunity to pray in a calm, reflective environment and this good practice should now be shared throughout the school. In order to develop worship further the school now needs to increase pupil involvement so that by the end of Key Stage 2 the children have more responsibility for planning, writing and delivering acts of daily collective worship within the classroom.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

The staff and children clearly demonstrate and witness to compassion, justice, reconciliation, love and forgiveness in their relationships. Throughout the inspection the children were observed to treat each other with respect and consideration and at all times the children's behaviour was outstanding. The relationships between staff and children are positive and children state that they feel safe and happy in school and valued their friends. The staff and pupils feel confident and secure in their witness to Christ, the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. The Gospel values are central to the life of the school and throughout the inspection the relationships between the staff and children bore witness to these values.

The school Mission Statement encapsulated in a school flower underpins the whole ethos of the school and is shared by the whole school community. The school flower provides an outstanding example of how a school can ensure that the school mission statement is known and understood by all children, regardless of their age. The impact of the Mission Statement is evident and tangible across the school community and the parents, governors and children all commented upon how the school flower illustrates how they are aiming to help children 'grow' personally, spiritually and academically. This school clearly celebrates and bears witness to the fact it is a 'family'.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Further develop the quality of teaching and learning by providing the children with differentiated activities and ensuring that marking provides children with opportunities to reflect upon their next steps in learning.
- Provide pupils with the skills to take on a leadership role in the planning and delivery of collective worship.

Holy Souls Catholic Primary School,
Wilworth Crescent,
Pleckgate,
Blackburn,
Lancashire
BB1 8QN

Dear Children,

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school. I really enjoyed spending the day with you and I am pleased to be able to tell you that the quality of Religious Education in your school is good with outstanding features.

I really enjoyed watching your lessons because you showed a great deal of enthusiasm for the topics you were studying. Your teachers and teaching assistants work extremely hard and you told me that you really like your teachers and the lessons they plan for you. The standard of your work is good but the teachers are going to help you improve your work further by providing you with more detailed feedback when they mark your work. This will help you to explore your faith further and give you the opportunity to think about how you can improve your work in the next lesson.

Your teachers have created many opportunities for you to pray together and I particularly liked looking at your class prayer books. I also enjoyed watching your assembly which included opportunities for you to pray silently, praise God through song and pray together. You told me that you really enjoy taking part in assemblies and I have suggested to the school that you could have more opportunities to plan your own collective worship.

Your behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent and it is obvious that you all care for each other. I could see that you were very proud of your school and you are happy to be part of your school family. Your school has a lovely Catholic atmosphere and both the staff and children show that they care for each other. Your school mission statement displayed in your school flower is excellent and the whole school community is working together to help you grow spiritually and academically. You should be very proud of yourselves and your school.

God bless.

Mrs McNally

SUMMARY REPORT TO PARENTS

On Tuesday 16th July 2013 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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