

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Sacred Heart is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of the Sacred Heart and St. Anne in Blackburn. The school is situated about one mile from the city centre in an area of owner occupied terraced houses. The learners come from a wide range of socio economic backgrounds. A significant minority come from homes of socially disadvantaged families. The learners live in privately owned houses and local authority properties. The proportion of learners who have English as a second language is 77%. This rises to 100% in the Foundation Stage. The age range of the learners is from 4 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 30 and there are currently 197 learners on roll of whom only 32 (17%) are baptised Catholics. Of these only 19 are from the parish. There are no Catholic learners in the Foundation Stage and applications for September 2007 indicate this trend will continue. The vast majority of the learners are of the Muslim faith. 19% of the learners are eligible for free school meals. 53 have been identified as having special educational needs and 6 have a statutory statement of special educational need. Of the 11 teachers 3 (27%) are Catholics

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Sacred Heart school is satisfactory in providing its learners with a Catholic education in an ethos where they feel valued as members of a caring and supportive environment. Learners enjoy coming to school. They are very friendly, polite and well behaved. They work hard to please and thus meet the high expectations of the staff. Relationships within the school are very positive. School and parish links are good and the very well organised parish Sacramental Programme ensures that the few Catholic learners and their families are fully supported on their faith journey. The staff and governors make every effort to ensure the school is a focal point for cohesion in the local community. Learners demonstrate respect for themselves and each other and are developing a good sense of responsibility. Moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 23 inspection in April 2002 there have been many changes of staff in the school. The headteacher was appointed in January 2004. 5 new teachers have joined the staff. The playground has been levelled and re-surfaced and painted with high quality markings. An outdoor play area has been developed for Reception learners. The issues identified at the last inspection have been addressed but as yet not all have been fully resolved. The governing body are in the process of appointing a new headteacher for September 2007 following the appointment of the current headteacher to a school in a different authority.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation of the Religious Education provision and collective worship is satisfactory but this should be developed further so that the governors are able to undertake a thorough and comprehensive evaluation for the future development and continued viability of the Sacred Heart as a Catholic school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that governors become fully involved in the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's provision for Religious Education and collective worship.
- Maintain the Catholic tradition of prayer and worship in the range of opportunities offered to its learners.
- Fully implement the Diocesan assessment guidelines for curriculum Religious Education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school has become increasingly difficult in recent months but is satisfactory. The considerably reduced number of Catholic learners on roll is seriously affecting the school's ability to provide a traditional Catholic education for these learners with the range of opportunities for collective worship being a cause for concern. The Mission Statement is still in the process of being reviewed. Only the headteacher and governors have been involved in the review. It is not on display in the classrooms. The governing body do not have a designated governor for Religious Education. The governors do not have a system for rigorously monitoring the Religious Education provision and collective worship in the school. This issue should be addressed urgently. The information they receive is included in the headteacher's termly reports. Whilst every effort has been made to recruit Catholic teachers only 3 out of 11 teachers are baptised Catholics. The school supports the parish Sacramental Programme which is very well organised by the parish priest and experienced catechists. The Sunday children's liturgy further strengthens home and parish links for the Catholic learners. No teacher has a performance management objective related to the Catholicity of the school. The governing body encourages teachers to obtain the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. Two teachers hold this qualification and the headteacher is in the process of studying for it. The traditionally good and supportive relationship between the governing body and the majority of the parent body has been brought into question in recent weeks over the matter of liturgical celebration.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship has been assessed by the school as being good. The inspector judges it to be satisfactory. The school has a policy statement for prayer and worship. Each classroom has an attractive focal area for prayer and the traditional prayers of the church are displayed. Whole school Masses are held each term in church and on Holy Days of Obligation and special occasions. It is made clear to all parents that they may withdraw their children from these celebrations. 80% of the non Catholic parents choose to let their children attend. The remainder keep their children at home until the others return to school. No alternative provision is made on these occasions. The learners' visit to church for the recent traditional Ash Wednesday liturgy led to friction with some parents. The governing body are trying to resolve the dilemma. Whole school, class led and weekly "Praise" assemblies are features of the provision. During the inspection the class led assembly for Year 1 learners, of whom only one child was a Catholic, was appropriate to the age of the learners and reflected the Religious Education curriculum. Learners spoke clearly and sang enthusiastically. Many parents attended the assembly and enjoyed it. The school does not keep records of assemblies and celebrations. The class collective worship session attended was more indicative of a short lesson. The session lacked both a spiritual element and a genuine sense of gathering together to reflect on its content. Celebrations are organised within the parish throughout the year and learners take a full and active role. In the prayer sessions observed it was noticeable that all learners were not fully involved although they were respectful. The school is encouraged to remember that the Catholic tradition of prayer and worship should be maintained in the range of opportunities offered to its learners.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Learners' achievement and standards in Religious Education are good overall. Learners enter the Foundation Stage with standards below national expectations. Poor language skills are the main concern. By the end of Key Stage 1 learners have a good factual knowledge of the Catholic faith. The Year 2 learners observed discussing the events of Holy Week and "hot-seating" Pilate on why he had condemned Jesus to death provided an example of high achievement. This reflected the quality of the teaching and the teacher's knowledge. Learners are able to re-write versions of stories they have heard and use appropriate religious vocabulary in their discussions. Clear and consistent progress is evident in their workbooks. In Key Stage 2 this progress is maintained. The younger learners have a good knowledge of the events of Holy Week and understand the link between the Last Supper and the Mass. They are able to write prayers, have knowledge of the psalms and understand our responsibility to care for all God's creation. The older learners have a good understanding of the meaning of vocation and a very good knowledge of other faiths. They have a good sense of right and wrong and are proud of the way they are able to have an impact through the school council and also as prefects and as "playground buddies". They give generous support to several charities.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspector agrees with the school that the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good. All lessons have a clear focus and are well planned. The objectives of the lessons are explained to the learners. Resources are carefully prepared and used effectively to enhance the learning process. Technology is used very effectively by teachers and learners. This is a strength of the school. A range of teaching styles is evident and designed to meet the requirements of both the lesson content and the age of the learners. Learners are encouraged to be involved in class discussions and tasks are set which meet the needs of all of them. Teaching assistants are fully involved in the lessons and support the learning of individual learners. Most lessons have pace and teachers keep to the planned timings for allocated tasks. Assessment strategies have been developed but work is still not being levelled as suggested in the diocesan guidelines for assessment. The school should implement these strategies as soon as possible. All work is carefully marked. Good work and special effort is praised and constructive suggestions made for how work could be improved. Learners have good attitudes to their learning. They listen attentively, are interested in the lesson content and are keen to have an input into class discussions. They work responsibly and productively in pairs and small groups. Behaviour at all times is very good.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is currently satisfactory. However inspection evidence reveals that in order to meet the needs of the youngest learners in a class where there are no Catholic children elements are being introduced into the curriculum which are not included in the *REvision 2000* guidelines for learners of this age. In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 Islam and other Christian faiths are taught. Within the diocese the *REvision 2000* guidelines should inform the planning for all curriculum Religious Education lessons. Supplementary Catholic schemes may also be used if necessary, to complement the guidelines. In Key Stage 2 the school is including the diocesan World Faiths programme. The time allocated to curriculum Religious Education meets both national and diocesan requirements and the length of individual lessons enables the older learners to produce extended pieces of writing. No learners are withdrawn from curriculum Religious Education. Visits to the church are used effectively to extend the learners' experiences. One parent withdrew his child from a Nativity play last year. The Religious Education curriculum contributes significantly to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the learners.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education is satisfactory overall. The headteacher is the Religious Education co-ordinator. He took on the responsibility when he came to the school in 2004 and is currently studying for the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. Two members of staff hold this qualification. There are 3 Catholic teachers on the staff. However none of these is involved directly in the teaching of Religious Education. The school has a policy statement on curriculum Religious Education. The headteacher monitors the teachers' planning and observes lessons as part of his performance management observations as is the case with other subjects. The resources for curriculum Religious Education have been audited. They are of a good quality and adequate for the needs of both learners and teachers. A range of books are available in the library for learners to borrow. Displays throughout the school are attractive and reflect the faith life of the school.