

INSPECTION REPORT

Sacred Heart RC Primary School, Rochdale

Inspection date 26th March 2013
 Reporting Inspector Margaret Dolan
 Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Primary
 URN 105828
 Age range of pupils 3-11
 Number on roll 237
 Appropriate authority The Governing Body
 Chair of Governors Mrs Annette Bradshaw
 Headteacher Miss Christine Holdgate
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Miss Christine Holdgate
 Date of previous inspection 9th May 2007

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The quality of the Word of God	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

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic primary school is a voluntary aided primary school serving the parish of The Sacred Heart, Rochdale. The school is one form entry with 237 pupils on roll including 35 in the nursery. 98% of the children are baptised Roman Catholic. The school population is predominantly white British. In 2009 the parish boundaries were changed and this resulted in a significant change in the school's intake profile and the school context census information shows that 55.7% of the children come from some of the most deprived areas nationally. 22% of children are entitled to Free School Meals and 10% of the children have English as an additional language. The school also has a long tradition in education Traveller children and managing the gaps that can occur when the children are out of school. There are 14% of children with Special Educational Needs, 8% receiving support in the classroom and 6% with additional needs or having a statement of special educational needs. The school has been awarded the 'Outstanding Extended School', kite mark.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Sacred Heart is an outstanding Catholic primary school where staff and pupils are encouraged to aspire to use their talents to do their best in a caring community of faith. The mission statement, states, 'We are like a family, where everyone is welcomed, respected and cared for and where love is at the heart of everything we do', and this is the basis of everything that happens within the school. Inspirational leadership at all levels and the very supportive and committed team of governors ensure development and progress in all areas of school life. Standards in Religious Education are very high because of the high expectations in teaching and learning set by the staff and the delivery of challenging and creative lessons. Children, parents and parishioners feel welcome and information is regularly given to parents on their children's progress and on events happening in school. The children are confident, polite and happy and feel included in all aspects of school life. The prayer life of the school is outstanding and is enhanced by the support of the Spiritans community, the pupil chaplaincy team and the quality of Masses, liturgies and religious assemblies planned with and for the children. The Parish Priest and catechists ensure that their journey through the sacramental programme is meaningful and this is fully supported by the school. Staff bear witness to their own faith and provide excellent leadership and support in the faith journey of the children. The children have a strong sense of morals and justice which helps them to understand their place in the world and the influence they can have to make the world a better place.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- **Inspirational leadership at all levels is outstanding**
- **Behaviour is exemplary and the children show great respect**
- **The quality of Religious Education and the development of the spiritual life of the children is outstanding**
- **The welcome and inclusion of the families, parishioners and local community is outstanding**

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The school is led by a dedicated and inspirational headteacher with the help of an experienced and willing leadership team and supported by a very competent staff. The governors are very committed to the development of the school and work in a systematic and well organised way supporting and challenging the progress of the school. The philosophy of the school staff and the governors is based on the development of the whole child and on giving children the opportunities to achieve in every area to the best of their ability. The religious life of the school is at the heart of the curriculum and each week begins with 'statements to live by' which are introduced at the Taize assembly and prepared by the older children and members of the pupil's chaplaincy team. The mission statement which is based on the word love is reviewed regularly and is seen throughout the school in displays, procedures and policies. Staff are encouraged to develop their own spiritual life and are expected to work towards the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies within two years of teaching in the school. Religious objectives are set for performance management for the Headteacher and staff. The Headteacher and leadership team lead by example through their enthusiasm and deep spirituality and give direction and support to younger and newer members of staff. There is a good relationship with the Parish Priest and the school supports the Sacramental programme which is parish led. The school also has the support of the Spiritans Chaplaincy team who are regular visitors and contributors to the religious life of the school.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD COMMUNITY IS OUTSTANDING

The Religious Education curriculum is based on The Way, The Truth and The Life which is regularly reviewed to consider the impact of the teaching and learning in religious lessons and this also forms part of the in-service cycle within the school. Religious Education is monitored and evaluated by the headteacher who is also the Religious Education coordinator and pupils' work is assessed and developed regularly to ensure consistent high standards. Thorough tracking systems within the school demonstrate that achievement in Religious Education is at least equal and often better than the very high standards achieved in literacy. Well differentiated lessons ensure that teaching and learning in Religious Education matches the needs and capabilities of all the children and thought is given to the experiences of the children in the wider community. The very high standards set by staff and the challenging and creative lessons ensure a good foundation for the faith journey of the children. The children are very proud of the work they do and were keen to talk about the topics they had explored in their Religious Education books including work on Holy Week and the life of Jesus. The word of God through scripture is integral to the life of the school and is seen in everything they do. In an excellent lesson seen during inspection in Upper Key Stage 2, the children were exploring how we keep going when things are difficult. They considered The Prodigal Son and the teacher looked back constantly to the scriptures as evidence, using bible references to reinforce the children's knowledge of the New Testament. In an excellent lesson in Lower Key Stage 2 children re-enacted The Last Supper and the Celebration of Mass and were able to reflect on how our Sunday celebration is based on the stories we know about the life of Jesus. Children from Key Stage 1 in an excellent lesson, referred back to the Passover Meal and the words spoken by Jesus and were able to compare them to the words we hear in Mass at the Consecration.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

Sacred Heart school is a very welcoming community where parents and visitors feel at ease and valued. Parents feel able to talk to staff about their children and the development of the Peace room for parents, as well as staff and children has given a new dimension for welcoming parents into school. The formation of the Little Hearts group gives parents of pre-school children the opportunity to meet and pray together and to familiarise themselves with the school and staff. The school welcomes

families from the travelling community and now embraces families who have recently moved into the area from African and Polish culture. The church cafe which follows the liturgical year, gives parents the opportunity for creative prayer, reflection and to make resources to support their child's learning in Religious Education.

The school has developed links with partner schools and hosts meetings for leaders of different faiths. As part of the curriculum children are taught about different religions and this gives them a greater insight into the faith and cultures of the people in the vicinity in a very diverse community. Governors are regular and very welcome visitors to the school and are able to observe at first hand the information given to them in the very thorough and informative reports received from the Headteacher. New children to the school have a 'buddy' to make them feel welcome and to guide them around the school. Older pupils in school have responsibilities to help to ensure no-one feels lonely and help to develop friendship groups. These include playground pals, the KS2 peer mediation group, story tellers and the pupil chaplaincy group who help to develop the spiritual life of the school. There is a flourishing school council who meet weekly and take their role within the school seriously, working on topics and putting forward ideas for equipment and the physical development of the school. They have achieved the bronze award for School Councils. Parents are kept well informed through the school notice board, regular newsletters, e-mails and texts as well as items in the local newspaper.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

The pupils demonstrate high levels of respect and care of others in their behaviour around the school. They support the community through working with local charities but also by saying prayers and sending little cards to those who are sick or in need. The Christ-centred ethos encourages forgiveness, understanding and respect and every child is given the chance to excel.

Pupils use the School Council as their voice and the School Council is invited to attend governors' meetings to pass on queries and ideas from the other pupils. Pupils have a strong sense of justice and morality and the mission of the school is discussed in the weekly assembly. Pupils feel secure and safe because of mutual respect and emotional intelligence is developed to a high level helping children to manage their feelings and behaviour. The school has a comprehensive Sex and Relationships Education programme. Governors work with staff on attendance and anti-bullying and there are teachers with special responsibility for safeguarding and children with additional needs. Pupil premium funding is used to nurture pupils and to help overcome social barriers. The school offers support and encouragement to families whose children are taking part in the Sacramental Programme.

There are clear procedures for welcoming visitors which ensures the safety of the children and there is regular training for lunchtime staff. Lunchtime clubs and activities are arranged each day. The Headteacher convenes a half termly review group meeting of pupils to listen to their views on all areas of their school life including lunchtime and playtime. There are strong links with the High School and many joint activities take place to ease transition for the older pupils.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

There are many opportunities for the children to develop their prayer life including Masses, prayer liturgies and assemblies, collective worship, Christian meditation and spontaneous prayer. Staff are confident in planning for and leading prayer and worship. There is a developing role for pupils leading prayer and worship and with the development of the pupil chaplaincy team more responsibility is given for choosing scriptures and planning liturgies. This happens particularly in the assembly when pupils use the weekly Statements of Belief as a structure for direction and prayer. The Spiritan community work in partnership with the school celebrating Mass with the children and working with staff and groups of children. During inspection, Mass was celebrated with the whole School for Holy Week.

Behaviour was exemplary. The children were very reverential and showed great respect for the celebration of the Mass. Children from all age groups were involved in readings and prayer and the singing was wonderful.

An inspirational collective worship was arranged in the nursery at the end of the day so that parents could be involved when collecting the children. A large number of parents attended and sat with their children to support them with their prayers. The liturgy was based around being a good friend. The story of Peter denying Jesus was acted out by two children in costume and the children talked about being sorry when we do something wrong. The school encourages parents and parishioners to attend all religious events. When the children begin reception class, members of the parish community attend their welcoming ceremony and present them with cards to help them, with their parents' help, to learn some simple and traditional prayers. The use of the Peace Room for prayer and meditation is also popular and the development of the Little Hearts pre-school group is another area where the prayer community is expanding. The school also actively promotes participation in parish life with pupils joining the parish choir and becoming altar servers.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

Through the example of the very committed staff the school is a very active Catholic spiritual community. Staff are excellent role models who bear witness to their faith and provide support for the children on their faith journey. Inspirational lessons seen during inspection enhance all aspects of Religious Education and the secure religious knowledge of the teachers provides depth to their teaching. The mission statement is embedded in all aspects of school life and is constantly referred to. Gospel values are evident in all policies and procedures and the weekly 'statements to live by' help the children and staff to concentrate on particular aspects of their lives. Behaviour throughout the school was outstanding. Children were confident and were able to question and challenge thinking especially through pupil voice knowing that their views were important and would be listened to. The children were very willing to speak about their faith. The partnership of the school with the Spiritan community enhances the prayer life of the school and the development of the pupil chaplaincy team strengthens the commitment of the pupils. The Headteacher's half termly walk around the school looking at religious display maintains high standards of relevance and presentation. During inspection, classrooms displays included children's interpretations of the Stations of the Cross and references to Lent and Holy Week are used to support the religious life of the school.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- **Continue to maintain the very high level of the prayer life of the school including the development of the pupil chaplaincy team**
- **Further develop the effective use of The Way, The Truth and The Life to promote the children's understanding of their Catholic faith**

Letter to pupils

Dear Pupils

Thank you for your very special welcome when I came to visit you. Your school is outstanding in every way. This is because you and your teachers work very hard and always try to do your very best.

I was very impressed by the way you behaved and by the way you cared for one another. Your Religious Education lessons were really good and I was particularly pleased by your books which were beautifully presented and full of lots of interesting things. When I talked to you around the school you were able to explain to me the wonderful things that you do and I could see why you had the bronze award for the school Council who seem to do great things. It was good to see that you are developing your chaplaincy team too. I really liked your new Peace area and I am sure you will be able to use it even more in the future for prayers and quiet times. There are lots of good things going on in your school and I know you are very proud.

Thank you once again for making me feel welcome and I hope that you have a very good summer term.

God bless you all,

Yours sincerely

**Mrs Margaret Dolan
Section 48 inspector**

Summary report for parents

On March 26th 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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