

INSPECTION REPORT

Inspection date	July 11 th 2013
Reporting Inspectors	Margaret Dolan Brendan Hennessy
Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005	
Type of School	Primary
URN	106256
Age range of pupils	3-11
Number on roll	232
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Doctor Darah Burke
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Gedzielewski
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Mrs Susan Gedzielewski/Sarah Rudd
Date of previous inspection	March 2008

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 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 of God community	1	
The quality of the Welcome community	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

St Christopher's is a Voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary School serving the needs of the parish of St Christopher's in Ashton-under-Lyne. This is an average size primary school serving an area of increasing social and economic disadvantage. There are 232 children on roll including 26 part time children in the nursery. 88% of the children are baptised Roman Catholic. Attainment on entry is below national average but children leave having made very good progress and results are significantly above national average. The school is predominantly White British although there are an increasing number of children from parts of Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. 21% of the children have English as an Additional Language which is in line with national averages. 13% of the children are entitled to Free School Meals.

The school currently has 15% Of children on the Special Needs Register.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Christopher's is an outstanding Catholic primary school offering the children a rich faith experience in line with their mission statement. The school is well led by a very committed headteacher, a strong senior leadership team and staff and is supported by a very experienced governing body. The senior leadership create an ethos which is inclusive, welcoming, and prayerful and has high expectations. There is a very good relationship with the parish and the parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor. Lessons are stimulating and innovative and high quality displays around the school clearly demonstrate the Word of God in evidence. Monitoring and assessment of the Religious Education curriculum has ensured that there has been significant development since the last inspection. The celebration of Mass, prayer services and assemblies are well prepared and give the children many opportunities to develop and enrich their prayer life. Parents feel welcome and at ease in school and able to talk to staff about their child's progress. The children are very proud of their school. The development of the chaplaincy team has enhanced the spiritual life of the school through thought provoking presentations and activities.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- Inspirational leadership in all areas is outstanding
- The introduction of the role of chaplain and the development of the role of the pupil chaplaincy team is outstanding
- The quality of Religious Education and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding
- Relationships, behaviour and care for all within the school is outstanding

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

St Christopher's is led by a dedicated and inspirational headteacher with the help of a very competent and experienced leadership team and supported by a very willing staff. The governors are supportive, proactive and committed to the aims of the school. They have been instrumental in shaping the vision of the school especially in the implementation of the 5W's, the diocesan scheme for development and delivery of Religious Education. The Chair of Governors works closely with the headteacher to ensure all the governors are aware of current issues and educational developments and views of the parents are sought through informal discussion and questionnaires. Each governor is linked to a year group and follows this group of pupils throughout their learning journey at St Christopher's school. Strong leadership from the Religious Education coordinator has ensured that there has been significant improvement since the last inspection. Monitoring and self evaluation is rigorous and includes regular classroom observations. Effective use for future planning is made of information gathered from assessment and this promotes good progress for all the pupils. Results of assessments and levels attained are kept in a very comprehensive Religious Education file. Appraisal is thorough and effective and performance management objectives in Religious Education are a regular feature. The Parish Priest is a well loved member of the school community. He is fully involved in the religious life of the school and visits regularly going into the classrooms and talking to the children. The sacramental programme is delivered by catechist from the parish, some of whom are also governors, and

the school is very supportive and attend all the sacramental celebrations in the parish. All members of the school staff are committed to the parish and the local community.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS OUTSTANDING

The Religious Education scheme, The Way, The Truth and The Life is fully embedded in the life of the school and 10% of the timetable is devoted to Religious Education. Staff are encouraged to attend relevant courses to develop and extend the curriculum. Work is stimulating and innovative and teachers have strong subject knowledge. Pupils are well motivated and engaged and are very proud of their books and the tasks they undertake. During inspection, a lesson in Year 6 began with very calm and reflective meditation thinking about The Beatitudes. The children then very competently, looked up bible passages and discussed how these stories could be relevant in our lives today. In Year 2, the children examined the feelings of Peter when he escaped from prison. The words they thought of were added to a paper chain and this was 'broken', by a child representing Peter in a reflection on feelings at the end of the lesson. In Early Years the nursery children talked about the things they would see when they went into church and they set up an area to represent the church. Reception children recalled their recent assembly and discussed how they tell other people about Jesus. This included telling a baby sister and asking parents the name of Jesus in Polish. In all lessons the background knowledge of the children was higher than normal due to significant prior knowledge and the use of higher order thinking and questioning resulting in exceptional learning skills. Standards and expectations in Religious Education are at least as good as those expected in literacy and teachers are always looking for ways to challenge high achieving pupils as well as supporting those with additional needs. Teachers work with local Catholic primary schools to develop planning and moderation in the Religious Education curriculum. The high quality of religious displays around the school clearly demonstrate the Word of God in evidence.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

St Christopher's is a very welcoming community where everyone feels valued and at ease. Staff in the school office are friendly, efficient, professional and helpful. Parents feel able to come into school to discuss concerns both informally and at the parent's meetings arranged by the school. Relationships are good throughout the school including staff, children and families. The admissions policy is inclusive and the school were awarded the Tameside Inclusive Schools Award in 2009. World religions are taught as part of the Religious Education curriculum and this helps children to understand and respect the beliefs and culture of others. Staff welcome the children into school each day and the Early Years department organise regular workshops and informal meetings for parents and carers. Parents are invited to attend fortnightly Masses, class and special assemblies and the 'mention' assemblies each Friday which always attracts a large number of parents. The children are very proud of their school and the way they can talk about their faith is a great credit to their teachers and families. They were able to explain the sacraments with great clarity and they were very proud of the responsibility they were given in arranging assemblies and Masses. There are strong links with the parish and the school participates fully in parish events. Parents are very impressed that teachers attend the sacramental meetings for their children arranged by parish catechists. Children are given responsibility to develop their leadership skills including older children being 'buddies' to younger children, playtime leaders and reading partners. There is a house system in the school and children are rewarded with points for good work and good behaviour. The children are aware of those who are less fortunate than themselves and fund-raise for CAFOD, Caritas, Francis House, and Willow Wood Hospice and recently money was raised for the Meningitis Trust in the name of a local child by taking part in a Gangnum dance. There is regular liaison with the high school and children are invited for visits to aid their transition into Year 7. There are plans to extend the schools chaplaincy links so that children can resume their chaplaincy commitments when they begin high school.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE OUTSTANDING

The mission statement reflects the ethos of the school by showing love and respect for everybody in all they say and do. Behaviour in the classrooms and around the school is exemplary. Comments about the behaviour of the children from visitors and places visited are very positive. Staff have high expectations of all groups of children and encourage them to fulfil their maximum potential. Forgiveness and reconciliation and living life to the full is encouraged. The school promotes high attendance and gives weekly rewards to the class with the highest percentage attendance. There are a wide variety of after school clubs and a very successful before and after school club which provides stimulating activities and excellent care. Provision for safety of the children is excellent and based on mutual respect, positive relationships and shared responsibility. All staff have regular safeguard training and in addition five members of staff have undertaken advanced safeguarding training. Pupils are very happy in school and feel safe and secure. They are confident that if they have any problems they can speak to a member of staff and that any problems will be dealt with sympathetically. The school works with families and other agencies to sustain learning and social skills groups, intervention programmes and circle time activities contribute to the child's emotional development. Pupil Premium funding is used to nurture pupils and to help them overcome social barriers. Sex and Relationships Education is taught across the school during the summer term. Parents are kept fully informed about what happens in school and are invited in to school if there are serious concerns. The school Council discussed playtime and lunchtime provision and how they could help develop friendship groups through activities.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The spiritual life of the children is held in the highest regard with children afforded opportunities every day to be involved in collective worship. All classes pray together in the morning, at lunchtime and at the end of the day. There are class Masses fortnightly to which families and parishioners are invited and these are planned and prepared by children. One child commented, "In this school we have more freedom to plan our own Masses and assemblies." Whole school assemblies reflect on personal faith, moral issues, festivals, special occasions and other religions and cultures. During inspection the assembly led by the chaplaincy team was awe-inspiring and presented with confidence and clarity. Rocks were placed on the display by younger children to remind us of St Peter and his successor Pope Francis, who took his name from St Francis of Assisi. Stories and prayers were accompanied by appropriate pictures on the whiteboard and hymns were sung and reflections read enhancing the quality of collective worship. In Year 4 Collective Worship began with a time of meditation and reflections on their beliefs as Christians. Four children sang a Taize chant and candles were lit on the prayer display. The teacher read from St Paul about the church being one body and how we are all need each other. The wonderful singing at the end of the reflection of, 'I watch the Sunrise' was led by a very talented boy soloist. The religious life of the school is greatly enhanced by the provision of a school chaplain and a very committed pupil chaplaincy team. The team had been trained and commissioned at the Cathedral and are instrumental in developing prayer and worship through creative and spiritual activities. Pupil chaplains lunch together twice a week to plan activities and each chaplain is allocated a class to work with. They take their role very seriously, helping in the playground, setting the altar for Mass and finding time to reflect and pray together. They also make cards to give to pupils who are have times of celebration, sorrow or concern in their families. They have set up close links with a local primary school and have established partner prayer sponsors for children on the sacramental programme. Year 6 children took part in a retreat at the Marist Centre to help prepare them for the new phase in their lives. A school prayer book has been developed to help children in their spiritual development.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

The mission statement reflects the ethos of the school and a version has been developed with the children referring to word, worship and witness. The children have a clear understanding of God's world and are aware of their responsibilities as stewards of creation. Relationships are excellent between all members of the community and staff demonstrate positive role models. A strong sense of belonging to a community exists based on the teachings of Jesus. One child said, "We take religion more seriously than most other

schools because that is what Jesus would want us to do.” Children relate well in different social and ethnic groupings and they have a good insight into similarities and differences between their own and other cultures and religions. Children are confident and open to new ideas and ethical issues are often raised in school assemblies, class discussions and in other curricular areas. The children clearly demonstrated justice, compassion and love in their daily lives and it is clear that they are witnesses to Christ's forgiveness and reconciliation when all around them seems challenging.

The innovative chaplaincy team promotes a culture of confidence and witness through their activities to enhance the spiritual life of the school. Holy Week is the highlight of the school year with all members of the school community bearing witness and taking part in collective and reflective prayer sessions including The Stations of the Cross and a Passion play. Close links with the parish are enhanced with the regular visits of the Parish Priest and the work of the catechists for the sacramental programme. The school choir sings in the community including local hospices and at the Age Concern Day Centre.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Further develop the already active chaplaincy team through links with other primary schools and the high school
- continue to maintain the very high standard of reflective and meditative prayer life within the school

Dear children,

Thank you for your very special welcome when we 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.

We were impressed by your excellent behaviour and by the way you cared for one another. Your Religious Education lessons were really good and interesting and we were particularly impressed by the way you took part in all your lessons. Your books were excellent and you are rightly very proud of them. Your assemblies and prayer services were wonderful and we were pleased that you had been so involved in planning and presenting them. You are very lucky to have a great chaplaincy team. Perhaps you may wish to join them when you are the right age. You have a lovely school and the displays you have prepared around the school will remind you of the work you have done and of the special ways you can help others.

Thank you once again for making us feel so welcome and we hope you have a good summer break.

God bless you all,

Yours sincerely

Mrs Margaret Dolan

Mr Brendan Hennessy

Section 48 Inspectors

Summary report for parents

On July 11th 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 be accessed via both the school website and the education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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