

**INSPECTION REPORT**

**St Gabriel’s RC Primary School, Vicarage Road South, Rochdale, OL 11 2TN.**

Inspection date 7<sup>th</sup> December 2016

Reporting Inspectors Brendan Hennessy  
 Andrew Sowerby

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

Type of School Primary  
 URN 105825  
 Age range of pupils 5 -11  
 Number on roll 200  
 Appropriate authority The Governing Body  
 Chair of Governors Mary Chadwick  
 Headteacher Laura Bolton  
 Religious Education Subject Leader Kathryn Wilkinson  
 Date of previous inspection September 2010

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

## **CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL**

St Gabriel's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School serves the parishes of St Gabriel and the Angels, Castleton and St John the Baptist, Rochdale. This is an average sized primary school with 200 pupils on roll, 64% of whom are baptised Roman Catholic. The school is situated in an area of mixed housing; 24% of pupils are currently entitled to free school meals. On entry to school the children's starting points are generally below 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 9% of the pupils with Special Educational Needs and 7% with English as an additional language. There are 9 teachers in the school, 7 of whom are Catholic, 3 hold or have started the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. School provides extended provision for those children who need it both before and after school. The school holds the Healthy Schools, Eco Schools and the Green Tree national awards.

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

St Gabriel's is a good Catholic primary school with some outstanding features. This warm and friendly school offers the children a true Catholic education in a caring and supportive setting. Gospel values are clearly evident and lived out by all in the school. The dedicated head teacher, talented leadership team and the hardworking staff do all they can to ensure that the spiritual and pastoral needs of all in the school family are met. The parish priest and governors are very supportive. They are committed to ensuring that Catholic education of the highest standard is provided for all in this inclusive school. A strong Catholic ethos is evident throughout the school and this has helped to create a caring community where the happy and enthusiastic children thrive as they learn, play and pray together. Prayer and worship is very much at the heart of this school and the many opportunities for worship have enhanced the individual faith journeys of all in school. The quality of teaching in religious education is always good and often better, which ensures very good standards are achieved across the school; as evidenced in the children's books and work around school. The happy, friendly and well-mannered children are very proud of their school. They have a positive attitude to learning and really want to succeed in all that they do. Parents feel very welcome, valued and that they are listened to; they stated that school was very much a 'family'. 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 commitment and leadership of the headteacher, who has a clear vision for Catholic education in the school. She is very well supported by a talented senior leadership team, dedicated RE subject leader and experienced governors.
- The happy, respectful, well behaved and enthusiastic children, who always want to do their best.
- The positive atmosphere of teamwork among the staff team, who strive to provide a caring and nurturing school that has an affirming effect on the lives of the children.
- The exceptional provision for welfare and pastoral care of the children and families that has a positive impact on the community.

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

St Gabriel's is very well led by a dedicated and committed headteacher who has a clear vision for Catholic education and a well-defined sense of purpose for the education of the whole child. Together with the deputy headteacher, they demonstrate a strong, spiritual commitment and clearly value the worth of every member of the school community. They are supported by an innovative and dedicated RE subject leader, a talented leadership team and an enthusiastic staff team. The governors have a clear, strategic plan for the school and are deeply committed to the success of the school. They are proactive in providing support and challenge. Governors and staff do all that they can to ensure that RE and the development of the Catholic life of the school is at the core of the school's thinking and practice. The supportive parish priest is a regular visitor to school and all in school

value his contribution to the spiritual life of the school. Pupil leadership is well established through the school council and the GIFT chaplaincy team; pupil voice is prioritised in many areas of school life. Self-evaluation is rigorous and robust, honest and accurate. This, combined with relevant professional development for staff, has had 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 is clearly evident across the school and permeates all aspects of school life. The quality of leadership at all levels of the school community makes a significant contribution to the provision for Catholic education at St Gabriel's.

### **THE QUALITY OF THE WORD IS GOOD**

The school's recently reviewed mission statement is clearly displayed throughout the school. It is known, lived and witnessed throughout the school. The importance of the Word of God was clearly demonstrated all around the school in the many thoughtful and enriching displays. Religious education is at the core of the school curriculum and staff place a high priority on the teaching and learning of RE. This was evident in the knowledge and understanding of the staff and the very good standard of children's work. Teaching and learning was found to be good overall with some creative teaching and engaging learning observed across the school. In one class the children were challenged, through role play and discussion, to reflect on Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem and a modern day refugee family's journey. In another, where the class was thinking about the Annunciation, the children composed powerful questions in order to 'hot seat' Mary; and younger children told the story of the Nativity in a child centred re-enactment. In all lessons observed good pace, high expectation and positive relationships were evident. The children were engaged in good discussions with each other and they were encouraged and challenged by effective questioning. Constructive marking and feedback was evident across the school helping the children to improve their work and to reflect on their learning and understanding of RE. Children are developing religious literacy and Sacred Scripture is made relevant and meaningful to the children in many vibrant and joyful ways. The children show a real interest and enthusiasm in RE, they were happy and confident to share their understanding of their faith. They learn about world faiths through religious education, assemblies and global links. This helps them to understand and respect the beliefs and cultures of others. Caritas in Action is being introduced to support the RE programme and the children's awareness of social justice. Parents were very positive about the importance of RE and commented on how much the children enjoy RE lessons.

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

St Gabriel's is a happy, joyful community where everyone is valued and treated with respect and dignity. This warm, welcoming and inclusive school clearly has Christ at the heart of all that it does. A friendly welcome, in the true spirit of hospitality built on an acknowledgement of Christ's presence in others, is extended to visitors by all the children and staff from the moment you enter the school. The school welcomes a wide range of visitors, parents and members of the wider community with love and respectful care. This welcoming tradition helps the school to reach out and support all in the community, recognising and respecting diversity at all levels. Respect for the dignity of the individual is clearly evident across the school and all staff set the example for children to follow. The staff team clearly demonstrate a caring nature for the children, parents and each other. This gives a sense of belonging and an affirming ethos throughout the school, where these supportive relationships thrive. The parish priest is a welcomed visitor and the children and staff look forward to his regular visits. The children are polite and well-mannered with a cheerful outlook in this happy, caring and compassionate school. Children and staff who are new to the school are quickly made to feel welcome and a valued members of the school community. The school welcomes parents and encourages their contribution to the life of the school. Parents commented that they feel appreciated and involved in all that their children do. The school's caring ethos and the development of the children's personal qualities are of paramount importance to the staff and governors. Children, parents, staff and governors quite rightly have a great sense of pride and belonging in this happy, caring Catholic school.

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

St Gabriel's school has a clearly defined expectation that the welfare of all in the school community is the responsibility of each and every member of the school family as they work and grow together. The school meets this expectation across all of its practices, procedures and processes. This inclusive school gives the highest priority to procedures to safeguard and protect; this good practice enables children and staff to feel safe and well cared for. The pastoral team is a great strength of the school and makes a significant contribution to the outstanding provision for the welfare of the children and their families. 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. Excellent relationships are evident across the whole school family based on love, care and respect. The staff are great role models for the children and their team work, relationships and shared values are a real strength of the school. The children are happy, enthusiastic, polite and well behaved. They state that they feel safe and know who to turn to if they are worried and on the rare occasion that bullying has been identified they say that it is always 'sorted out'. The children are encouraged to make the right choices. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of caring for others, especially the more vulnerable in school. The older children speak with great enthusiasm about their role in supporting and caring for the younger children. The children understand that it is important to help others and have compassion for those less fortunate as evident in their support for local and international charities. Pupil voice is encouraged, the school council and GIFT chaplaincy team are developing their leadership skills. There is a positive ethos in school, at the centre of which is Christ as an example for the whole community to aspire to.

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

Prayer is very much at the heart of this school. The children are encouraged to take opportunities for prayer and worship in its many forms, by the way they work together and through their charitable work. This has enriched the individual faith journeys of all in school as they seek to become a true worshipping community. The importance of prayer and worship is expressed and witnessed through classroom acts of reflection and meditation, drama and role play, spontaneous prayer, assemblies, Mass and liturgies. Each classroom has an age appropriate and relevant focal point for prayer and these are clearly valued by the children. Additional focal points for prayer and reflection are situated at key areas in the school; not least the prayer space created by the GIFT chaplaincy team and the prayer garden created from the work of the Learning for Life groups. This helps the children to understand that prayer can take place in many situations and in many ways. 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 of which were seen all around school. During the inspection the children had a leading role in the school assembly and classroom acts of worship observed. All of these provided opportunities for participation, joyful singing and reflection. They were uplifting, inclusive and thoughtful spiritual experiences that were respected by the children. The introduction of the GIFT chaplaincy team has had a positive impact on prayer and worship across the school. 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 really appreciate the input from the GIFT chaplaincy team and the impact this has on the prayer lives of all the children. Parents were also very positive about the sacramental programme, the support from school and the parish. An example of this was evident in the wonderful carol service for children and their families led by the parish Children's Champions.

### **THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS GOOD**

The mission statement has been reviewed to reflect the input and ownership of the current school family. It is known, lived and witnessed by all in school. The children have a very clear understanding of the statement 'In God's love: we welcome, we learn, we grow together' and are confident in witnessing the Catholic beliefs which underpin this. Gospel values are evidenced in policies and procedures and have a clear impact on learning and daily life. The staff are positive role models for the children, promoting the ethos and values of the school and helping them to recognise that Jesus is with them in all aspects of school life. Relationships are excellent between all members of the school community. There is a great sense of teamwork, enthusiasm, joy and celebration of successes at all levels among the staff, children and parents giving the school a tangible family feel. An atmosphere of calm and a sense of belonging permeates the whole school which helps to create

a happy and purposeful working environment for everyone in school. Observations during the inspection showed that children treated each other with respect, care, patience, concern and with dignity. The children have a good understanding of social justice and fairness. They are encouraged to reach out to those in need and give witness to Catholic values by fundraising for local and global charities. The children are able to articulate that they do this because Jesus told us in word and by example to love our neighbours as ourselves. There are strong home, school and parish links, which are enriched by the regular visits of the parish priest. School fosters a spirit of awe and wonder through religious education and the broader curriculum. The children are encouraged to hold God's world as sacred and look after it as they develop their knowledge and understanding of nature.

**AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

- To fully embed the new RE assessment procedures in line with the 'Come and See' programme.
- To integrate fully the Caritas in Action programme into the RE curriculum across the school.
- To further develop the leadership skills of the children as leaders of prayer and worship in school and the wider community.
- To continue to improve the quality of the children's learning by providing further opportunities for the children to engage with the 'big question'.

7<sup>th</sup> December 2016

Dear Children,

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us and for making our visit to St Gabriel's RC Primary School such a joyful occasion. You have a lovely school and we really enjoyed our time with you. Everyone in school tries to follow the example of Jesus and you all work so hard to always do your best, and because of this your school is a good Catholic school. You showed us in so many ways that you really do live out your school mission, 'In God's Love: We welcome, We learn, We grow TOGETHER'.

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 do well in school, how you look out for each other, your behaviour and good manners.

We really enjoyed seeing your lessons and learning about all the wonderful things you do in St Gabriel's. We were impressed with the quality of work in your RE books, your contributions in the lessons we saw and in your fantastic displays around school. Thank you for sharing your work with us. It was clear to us that you have a very good knowledge and understanding of our Catholic faith and that you all really try your best in all of your lessons.

It was so pleasing to see how attentive and confident you were in all the acts of prayer and worship you shared with us. They were all wonderful and every one of you showed great respect and reverence. Your behaviour was excellent, your singing was great and your prayers were uplifting. The GIFT chaplaincy team set 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 want 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.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Brendan Hennessy and Mr Andrew Sowerby  
(Section 48 Inspectors)

### **Summary Report to Parents**

On 7<sup>th</sup> December 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.

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

St Gabriel's is a good Catholic primary school with some outstanding features. This warm and friendly school offers the children a true Catholic education in a caring and supportive setting. Gospel values are clearly evident and lived out by all in the school. The dedicated head teacher, talented leadership team and the hardworking staff do all they can to ensure that the spiritual and pastoral needs of all in the school family are met. The parish priest and governors are very supportive. They are committed to ensuring that Catholic education of the highest standard is provided for all in this inclusive school. A strong Catholic ethos is evident throughout the school and this has helped to create a caring community where the happy and enthusiastic children thrive as they learn, play and pray together. Prayer and worship is very much at the heart of this school and the many opportunities for worship have enhanced the individual faith journeys of all in school. The quality of teaching in religious education is always good and often better, which ensures very good standards are achieved across the school; as evidenced in the children's books and work around school. The happy, friendly and well-mannered children are very proud of their school. They have a positive attitude to learning and really want to succeed in all that they do. Parents feel very welcome, valued and that they are listened to; they stated that school was very much a 'family'. 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 commitment and leadership of the headteacher, who has a clear vision for Catholic education in the school. She is very well supported by a talented senior leadership team, dedicated RE subject leader and experienced governors.
- The happy, respectful, well behaved and enthusiastic children, who always want to do their best.
- The positive atmosphere of teamwork among the staff team, who strive to provide a caring and nurturing school that has an affirming effect on the lives of the children.
- The exceptional provision for welfare and pastoral care of the children and families that has a positive impact on the community.

### **AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

- To fully embed the new RE assessment procedures in line with the 'Come and See' programme.
- To integrate fully the Caritas in Action programme into the RE curriculum across the school.
- To further develop the leadership skills of the children as leaders of prayer and worship in school and the wider community.
- To continue to improve the quality of the children's learning by providing further opportunities for the children to engage with the 'big question'.