

**INSPECTION REPORT**

**St John Fisher RC Primary School, Stanycliffe Lane, Manchester M24 2PB**

Inspection date 20<sup>th</sup> June 2016

Reporting Inspector Mr J Graves  
Mr D Harrison

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

Type of School	Primary School
URN	105849
Age range of pupils	4 -11
Number on roll	205
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Ms J Sullivan
Headteacher	Mrs N Hadfield
Religious Education Subject Leader	Mrs D Hunt
Date of previous inspection	July 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	1	
The quality of the Word	2	
The quality of the Welcome	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**

St John Fisher is a Voluntary Aided RC Primary school in the diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of St Agnes & St John Fisher. The school is situated close to the parish church. Pupils are arranged in single aged classes and the admissions number is 30. The headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in January 2015. The RE Co-ordinator has been in post since April 2015. The socio-economic catchment area in which the school is situated is wide and varied consisting of owner-occupied, social housing and rented accommodation. 92% of pupils are baptised Catholics. 16% of pupils are eligible for Pupil Premium. 22.9% of pupils have been identified as having Special Educational Needs or with a disability (SEND). 12.2% of children have English as an Additional Language. Attendance is at 96.7% for the period 01/09/15 to 20/06/16.

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

St John Fisher is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. The headteacher is a dedicated, hard-working, excellent leader, who has a clear vision for the future development of the school. Her determined and passionate commitment to the school has bonded the staff and the school has the foundations for a secure and successful future. Under her leadership and alongside the governing body, the school has successfully negotiated a time of transition and turbulence to reach its current position on its journey. It is moving forward at a rapid pace. This purposeful direction was evident throughout the inspection. The headteacher is well supported by an effective senior leadership team. St John Fisher is an extremely welcoming community that is developing a greater sense of pride in its work. Christ is at the centre. The children are making good progress with their work in RE as expectations and skilled teaching have increased. There is a real commitment to be an outward looking school with children showing great awareness and tolerance. The culture of the school is rooted in Catholic values, in particular love, and it is a place that children, staff and governors are proud to be a part of. The parish priest, Canon Mullins, is a regular visitor to the school. An aim of the school is 'to help all members of our school - adults and children - to be well-balanced, caring and aware of other people.' St John Fisher is effective in this aim and this was observed throughout the school. The parents interviewed felt that St John Fisher is a welcoming, loving, inclusive family that is open and respectful. A close-knit school that works in partnership with parents.

## **KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:**

- Outstanding Catholic Leadership from the headteacher and the leadership team.
- A caring, loving community, where children feel safe and welfare is paramount.
- Strong, positive relationships between staff and children based on Gospel values.
- Excellent behaviour as witnesses of Christ.

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

The improvements seen in the last 18 months have been driven by the headteacher. She is very aware of the school's strengths and the areas it needs to develop, and has proved that she is very effective at successfully tackling them. The new leadership team, together with the governors, have a clear vision of Catholic education around Gospel values, including love and justice. The RE subject leader leads by example and encourages all staff and children to develop as a faith community. All leaders show deep commitment to the school and to religious education. The headteacher and RE subject leader work with the Diocesan Visioning Group by trialling new initiatives and sharing good practice. All new governors are required to complete the diocesan training to make them aware of their role in the school, serving as a witness to Jesus Christ. The Chair of Governors works closely with the headteacher and is a regular visitor to the school. There is challenge from the RE Link Governor to the headteacher and RE Leader. Governors, of which many

are new to the role, have a refreshingly honest view of where the school has been and the positive strides taken in recent times to see the school move forward. Governors are now accessing training more frequently and are very informed about what goes on in school. They know about the school, as they visit to experience school life, for example, to look at children's work. One of the aims of the school is "to develop the whole child by fostering, in a Catholic atmosphere, qualities of mind, body, spirit, feeling and imagination." This was seen several times throughout the inspection, for example, when a child in one of the younger classes had a 'blank' moment, the staff gently guided him through to an answer.

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

Everything the school does is based on the mission statement, 'Love Jesus, love learning, inspiring each other to be the best that we can be.' The mission of the school is alive, and the children all know it; every child asked was able to recite it and furthermore, explain how the school helps them with its three main parts. A 'love of learning' was seen in lesson observations, such as the enthusiastic approach to their work observed by the children in a lesson involving older children and a lesson on creation with very young children. The RE policy of the school says that RE aims 'to bring clarity to the relationship between faith and life, and between faith and culture.' This was evidenced when older children were applying the values from the story of 'The Good Samaritan' to modern life. In a Key Stage 1 lesson, the children thoughtfully discussed the 'examination of conscience' and reflected on sacred Scripture reverently. Children inspiring each other is evident in the school in many ways, including the GIFT pupil chaplaincy team. One child was asked to explain how the school inspires her to be the best she can be, and she said that the people in the school "like the headteacher" inspired her. The work in the RE books are of a similar standard to that found in the English books and the books are made to look very special, particularly in the Early Years. Children are challenged to ask 'big questions' and this was evident as each class has a 'big questions' book which keeps a record of issues that the class have discussed, which is helping with the development of SMSC. Scripture is the focal of school life, eg: displays around school included Creation and the Prodigal Son. The school's PSHE policy states that school 'equips pupils with the knowledge, understanding, skills and strategies required to live healthy, safe, productive, capable, responsible and balanced lives.' This was seen in action when with the school council's work on a 'healthy schools representative.' The children are making impressive progress, and there is capacity in the school to move Word to outstanding.

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

St John Fisher RC Primary School places Christ at the centre of its community and the welcome it offers. This was evident from parents who told inspectors that they felt that there had been a shift towards greater child and family focussed engagement. This leads to a positive welcoming culture, which permeates the whole school and is clearly demonstrated by both the staff and children. There were several examples observed during the inspection where members of the community treated each other with love, kindness and respect. For example, the Year 6 children who look after Reception children; something that is greatly valued by the parents spoken to. Polish children in the school are given the opportunity to share Polish culture with the school whole family. A Polish teaching assistant works with Polish children and parents. There are clear structures and procedures for welcoming visitors in a way which also ensures the safety of all children. There are good systems for identification, referral and monitoring of issues around child protection and the staff are trained around these procedures. The children at St John Fisher were well-behaved and respectful to the inspectors as visitors to the school. Parents and carers attend Masses, assemblies, productions, concerts and sporting events held at school. A parent forum allows the views and opinions of parents to make a valuable contribution to the school. Outreach to all in the school community is an important part of school life. Those parents spoken to by inspectors felt confident that any issues brought to staff would be effectively resolved.

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

There are strong, positive relationships between staff and children which is a strength of the school. The headteacher has created a culture that has impacted very positively on day to day life. Respect, care and service to others is celebrated weekly in assembly with an award for an act of kindness towards another member of the school community. Children with SEND are treated with utmost respect. The school has staff trained to sensitively deliver Rainbows and Sunbeam sessions to support children suffering from loss or bereavement. The school's charity work includes fund raising for St Joseph's Penny, CAFOD and the Rotary Shoe Box Appeal and each class supports a charity throughout the academic year. Children's views are valued and shared in the school council meetings and action is taken, and progress on decisions made are displayed for all to see. The school employs a CARITAS social worker to offer support to vulnerable pupils and families. Pupils feel safe and they told inspectors that their school is a very happy place. They articulate kindness beautifully, for example a child in Y2 commented 'if someone says they don't like your clothes then just say something kind back – it's the best way!' 'A Journey in Love' was introduced as a scheme of work for Sex and Relationship Education at St John Fisher in summer term 2015. Parents, staff, and governors were all involved in the process of agreeing and implementing the scheme. The school's sex and relationship education policy states that the school aims to 'To engender growth in self-respect and self-worth recognising that each of us is created in the image and likeness of God.' The school has become outward looking and clearly all involved in the school community are sharing in this outstanding feature of St John Fisher.

### **THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS GOOD**

Children's own prayers are displayed in school. GIFT team lead prayer, including a CAFOD Harvest assembly each year and regular 'share and shine' assemblies. Children are increasingly confident in the prayer life of the school. However, they would benefit from many more opportunities to take ownership of the planning, resourcing, delivery and evaluation of prayer. This should include every child, in an age appropriate way, to be more creative. Planned sessions of mindful meditation are enjoyed by the children. There are plans to disseminate this emerging strength across the school. Parents who attend worship, feel very welcome. During worship, children sing beautifully and enjoy the actions songs and the chance to sing in rounds. There is a prayer garden, in memory of a former teacher, which is used for prayer, reflection and learning. There is a prayer box in the school hall for children's special intentions. Displays around school are used to show and stimulate prayer opportunities. Key Stage 2 classes spend a day on retreat reflecting on different themes. The school is well placed, due to the excellent leadership to increase the level of creativity in worship, liturgies and celebrations so that it impacts even further on the children's spirituality. Enabling the children to have the chance to listen to the 'still, small voice within'.

### **THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING**

There is a new and exciting sense of purpose at St John Fisher. Across the entire school community there is universal agreement that the positive direction of the school is reaping rewards. All at St John Fisher feel ownership of the school's determination to be a beacon of Catholic education in this part of Middleton. Pride in the school has returned. The school's mission is known and understood by all. The staff and pupils give witness to the beliefs and values of a Catholic Community and strive to follow Christ's example. Opportunities are plentiful for staff and pupils to help shape the Catholic life of the school. The children and staff have a highly defined sense of fairness and justice and are active in helping others, such as reaching out to the most vulnerable through and fundraising activities for charities demonstrating mercy and compassion for others. The school is developing strong chaplaincy links with St Mary's RC Primary School, Langley, with GIFT teams sharing faith experiences. The school's behaviour policy highlights their values i.e. 'contributes to making our school a happy, safe, secure and welcoming environment.' This was clear in all aspects of school life as the children behaved beautifully showing that there is a clear impact of Gospel values in the school. The children are a credit to the school and can look forward to a bright and successful future.

**AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

- To continue to raise standards of attainment in RE.
- To extend the number of opportunities for children to lead worship.

20<sup>th</sup> June 2016

Dear Pupils,

Thank you so much for making us feel welcome in your school when we came to inspect on behalf of the Bishop of Salford. We both really enjoyed meeting you and seeing your hard work, excellent behaviour and your wonderful manners.

Your headteacher does a great job in making the school the place it is. She gets really good help from her senior teachers, from all her staff and from the governors. They are so proud of you!

There have been lots of changes in the last couple of years, but we were really pleased to hear from you that you felt these were good changes. The mums and dads that we spoke to agreed.

Your school has a super Mission Statement, and it is alive in your school. We saw, 'Love Jesus, love learning, inspiring each other to be the best that we can be' everywhere we went.

Your teachers work very hard for you, and they are thinking of how they can help you learn even more, and how they can give you all more chances to lead prayers and worship in school.

Thank you once again! God bless.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Graves & Mr D Harrison

(Section 48 Inspectors)

## **Summary Report to Parents**

On 20<sup>th</sup> June 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.

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