

INSPECTION REPORT

St Mary's RC Primary School, Wood Street, Langley, Middleton, Manchester, M24 5GL.

Inspection date Friday 6th November 2015

Reporting Inspectors Mr Dennis Harrison
 Mr Mark Mountcastle

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

Type of School	Primary
URN	105818
Age range of pupils	3-11
Number on roll	435
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mr Mike Suddaby
Headteacher	Mr Ben Lavin
Religious Education Subject Leader	Mr Mike McGrail
Date of previous inspection	November 2010

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	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 of God community	2	
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 Mary's RC Primary School is situated on the Langley estate in Middleton, Manchester. The school has recently become a two form entry school with an admission number of 60. Full time provision is offered in the Nursery along with a range of extended services for children and families. The deprivation indicator shows that there is significant social deprivation within the school's locality. The proportion of pupils eligible to receive free school meals is well above average. Small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has close links with Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church, Langley. The school has benefitted from significant investment into its buildings in recent years. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in post for just over one year. There have been significant changes to the teaching staff in the last two years.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS GOOD

St Mary's RC Primary School is a good school with significant outstanding features in Welcome, Welfare, Witness and Worship. The outstanding and determined leadership of the headteacher is supported, with drive and passion, by the deputy headteacher. Together they have created a formidable team that has astutely and accurately evaluated the current position of the school. They have forged a clear and uncompromising plan to take the school forward in a most positive direction. The pace of the change may accelerate when the time that leaders are given to influence improvement is increased, as is planned. The governing body is very committed to the school, know the school well and give deep challenge and support to the leadership team. The parish priest has served this area for many years and plays a pivotal role in supporting the vulnerable families and giving spiritual guidance and encouragement. A significant number of children join the reception class with skills which are below those typical for their age, although they represent the full ability range. They are warmly welcomed into the school and benefit from the outstanding provision in the Early Years. They get off to a flying start. Their journey through the school is profoundly enriched by the outstanding care afforded to every child and the excellent experiences the school offers in Prayer and Worship. The school's provision for Word is good. There are significant strengths in the teaching of Religious Education. This will be even better when the examples of outstanding teaching are more commonly witnessed and when the progress that the children make is consistently strong across all age groups. The school is known as a wonderful, safe and inspiring place by families and within its community. Hence it bears witness to its mission in an outstanding way. This school is improving rapidly based on the motivation that each child is to have the very best of love and care. It is increasingly successful in this aim. The school should be very proud of the important and invaluable impact that it is having on the local community. As one parent commented, 'Life is great because this school makes everything happen. Our children are the luckiest to be here and all my dreams have come true'.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- Outstanding and energetic leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, ably challenged and supported by a vibrant and effective governing body.
- The exemplary attitudes of the children, who are impressively kind and friendly in nature. They are a credit to St Mary's and are proud to be 'children of God'.
- The thoughtful provision in worship, underpinned by exceptional foundations in welcome and welfare.
- The exceptionally positive learning environment.
- The distinctive Catholic atmosphere in every part of the school that allows the children to feel loved, safe and secure.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The quality of Catholic leadership at St Mary's RC Primary School, Langley, Middleton is outstanding. This is because leaders have accurately assessed the current position of the school and have set a course for

improvement that has urgency and clarity. It is well planned and ensures that every child will have the best the school can offer. The journey towards outstanding provision is well on the way. The headteacher, who has been in post for just over one year, has brought a dynamic determination to the school and his vision, passion and energy is infectious. He is supported superbly by the deputy headteacher and together they know exactly what they want for their school, especially for those on the margins of their community, and work tirelessly to move towards this ambition. Staff appreciate this energy and enjoy the sense of belonging they feel as they engage in improvement activities. Governors provide challenge and support in equal measure. They are not bystanders in this important work and they have developed a close partnership, wisely guiding the school and ensuring leaders have the resources and moral support to help the school improve rapidly. They are also very effective in gauging the well-being of staff. They have considered, in liaison with the leadership team, the potential benefits of extending the capacity of the leadership team and the time leaders have to do their work. This will secure the pace of change required and protect the clear and ambitious direction this school wishes to take to become an outstanding Catholic school. The RE subject leader is new in post and has brought dedication and commitment to this role. He is very successful in ensuring that RE has the highest status within the curriculum and he rightly desires that the outstanding teaching witnessed in some classes becomes the norm. The school is very successful in placing RE at the core of everything that happens at St Mary's.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS GOOD

The school has rightly evaluated the quality of the Word of God as good. Inspectors agree with this as the school is still on its journey towards outstanding provision. There are examples of outstanding teaching and learning, but these are not consistently found in all classes. Evidence of work in the children's books is variable. There is high quality work where teachers have planned to ensure high standards. In these classes, progress is impressive and the children's work is personal and thoughtful. On other occasions children could have benefitted from higher expectations in the presentation of their work and the opportunities for them to show how they have thought deeply and prayerfully about their learning. This can be achieved by applying the same depth of planning that is given to the school's outstanding provision in Worship. In the EYFS the children are immediately given a rich introduction to the RE curriculum. The children engage beautifully with well planned activities and feel confident and well supported. Every child is made to feel special. This was particularly evident in a lesson where the children discussed the importance of belonging to a family. Every child had a personal involvement by putting their own names into the 'Family of St Mary's' box. Thought provoking lessons in upper KS2 built on the children's capacity to consider 'Big Questions'. Outstanding behaviour allows the children to feel secure when sharing personal views and to show emotion. In one lesson the children cross referenced War and Peace within the bible and created images from wire to represent their learning and feelings. Superb use of support staff allowed all children to access the curriculum. On occasions, planning needs to demonstrate more clearly how children at all levels of ability will access learning opportunities in a personal, thoughtful way and how they can evaluate their successes.

THE QUALITY OF THE WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

It takes no time at all to feel completely at home in this welcoming school. The children shower you with their stories and proudly tell you of how good their school is. On entering every room a warm welcome is bestowed and a sea of smiling faces awaits you. Parents appreciate how approachable all staff are; forging genuine positive partnerships that continue throughout the school. This is a strong community with a defined sense of belonging. Everyone is valued and has a voice. Therefore, the school is very successful in creating a caring community that raises self-esteem, welcomes people where they are and celebrates each person as a child of God. Relationships across the school are excellent and the children grow in confidence, because the school's nurturing ethos gives them the space to have 'life to the full'. Parents are delighted at the open door policy that exists and feel that they share the journey of the child's education in true partnership. They come into school regularly and find the staff very approachable.

THE QUALITY OF THE WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

There is no shortage of kindness in this special Christian community. Under the careful watch of the leadership team every child is considered precious. When tough times arrive there is an abundance of comfort to support

the family. The parish priest plays a central role in reaching out to families; an excellent model of home, school and parish partnership. The warmth and tenderness afforded to the children is a huge strength of the school and this is why the school is so highly valued within the local community. The school provides free breakfasts so that the children get off to good start. There are numerous clubs and activities that enrich the school day such as the very popular 'Forest Phil' sessions that utilise the school's environment, superbly. The school takes its safeguarding responsibilities very seriously, giving the children well defined skills in staying safe in the modern world and being able to recognise, challenge and eradicate bullying. With Christ at the centre of all actions it is humbling to see how the children reach out to others, both locally in their support of the Angel Project for homeless adults and abroad in their work for CAFOD. Importantly, the children thrive on the kindnesses they share each day in the wonderful way older children care for younger ones and how supportively they play together. Their behaviour is outstanding and is steeped in compassion, respect and togetherness.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The quality of Worship at St Mary's is outstanding. The immediate impact was felt at 8.30am when the children's chaplains led a reflection in the library. The behaviour and reverence here set the tone for the rest of the day, as it was excellent. The children, very ably supported by the staff, are obviously very confident in their roles which have very quickly become embedded and a natural part of the timetable. The high standard was evident in the class liturgies that were observed. The children were always very focussed, exceptionally well behaved and led expertly by confident and very able staff. The early years foundation stage children praised God for this wonderful world and Key Stage 1 children thought deeply about fairness.

The weekly statement to live by, 'I try to be Just and Fair' was a common theme and the children were very articulate when tackling some sensitive issues both here and within lessons. The quality of Worship was also evident in the collective worship books which formed a central part of the displays in the classrooms. It is obvious from these that quality collective worship takes place on a regular basis and it is celebrated in a positive and vibrant way. As a result, the children are very confident in their relationships and in their own private and public prayer intentions.

THE QUALITY OF THE WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

Throughout St Mary's it is clear that this is a very caring school where each individual feels valued, safe and loved. The recently re-written mission statement permeates every aspect of school life and is clearly understood and embraced by all stakeholders. The strength of relationships is evident everywhere, particularly between staff and pupils, in lessons and informally around school. There is always a polite word, a happy hello and this extends to all visitors who are embraced by the warmth of the school. The children met by the inspectors were rightly proud of their school, felt safe and included. As a child said, "I am very lucky to be in this school."

During lessons and on displays around the school, constant references are made to justice, peace, community and belonging. Some very big issues were discussed in lessons regarding the injustice of racism and oppression, to the plight of refugees and how to follow the 10 commandments and live a better life. The recently appointed prayer and worship leaders have had a significant impact on school and the children are very passionate about their role. As one Chaplain said through her work she 'had become closer to God.'

St Mary's is a growing and popular school, assuming a powerful role within its neighbourhood, where children are given a traditional Catholic education and the very best of care.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- To increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in Religious Education so that expectations of what pupils can achieve is consistently high across the school.
- Increase the capacity of the leadership team so that leaders have more time to drive forward the improvements that are planned.

Friday 6th November 2015

Dear Children,

It was a joy to come and visit your school. We had a lovely day with you all and you made us feel so welcome. There are many special things going on at St Mary's! We think Mr Lavin and Mrs Geddis are doing a brilliant job in helping your school to be the best it can be. They are definitely helped by your wonderful behaviour and how kind you are to one another. It is a special team that you have where everyone pulls in the same direction. This why your school is so much fun and why there is so much to be happy about. We were also impressed by the good teaching and the lovely work in your books. We want this to get better and better. We also think the school is brilliant at looking after you and it is lovely how everyone seems to smile so much. This is just what Jesus wants of you! So well done and good luck with the future. Your school is in safe hands and many happy times are ahead.

God Bless

Mr Harrison and Mr Mountcastle

Department for Formation, Office for Education

Summary Report to Parents

On 6th November 2015 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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