

**INSPECTION REPORT**

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**St. Mary's R.C. Primary School Horwich**

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Inspection date                            2<sup>nd</sup> December 2014

Reporting Inspectors                    Mrs. Julie Frazer – Lead Inspector  
    Mr. John Thorpe – Additional Inspector

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

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Type of School	Primary
URN	105250
Age range of pupils	5-11 years
Number on roll	222
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mr. J. Shannon
Head Teacher	Mrs. Janet McKinlay
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Mrs. D. Ford
Date of previous inspection	February 2009

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<b>The Inspection judgements are:</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<p>Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate</p>
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	2	
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 is a Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic Primary School, admitting 98.6% baptised Roman Catholic pupils. It serves the Roman Catholic Parish of St. Mary's. Children entering the school come from backgrounds where there are no serious socio-economic issues, however, some families have difficult home circumstances and to support these, the school employs a family support worker. The school is very popular and is oversubscribed; having a stable population. On the day of the inspection the Parish Priest had retired and whilst the incoming Parish Priest had arrived in the parish he was not available, due to prior commitments. However, the school had secured another priest to celebrate the whole school Mass. The school's deprivation indicator is 0.13 which is below the national average. The percentage of children who are in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) is 14% which again is below the national average. Pupils have a predominantly white/UK heritage and the number of SEN pupils is 11.7% which is also below the national average.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS GOOD WITH MANY OUTSTANDING FEATURES**

St Mary's is a good school with many outstanding features. The school provides a safe, secure and welcoming environment where every pupil knows they belong and feels trusted to blossom through faith into the person God wants each one to become. The school helps children to appreciate their own lives and their place in God's plan; building a positive self image and sense of wellbeing. The children are able to engage with 'the Big Questions' and so the children are encouraged to develop curiosity through their journey of faith and their love of learning. Children are encouraged to see their lives as having meaning and purpose and to develop an openness of heart and generosity of spirit towards one another.

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

- The way in which new children are welcomed in to the school including those children who start their education in St. Mary's Reception Class, as well as those children who join later in their school life.
- The way in which the older children take great responsibility for caring for the younger children in school.
- The way in which it is evident that every aspect of the Catholic life of the school impacts on the children, to the extent that it underpins their behaviours and attitudes, both in school and when they are in the wider community.

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

Governors have a strong commitment to the Church's Mission in Education and this is a clear priority for them in this school. They place the children at the heart of all their decision making and vision for the school. Leadership shows clear witness to the Gospel values and the commitment to meet the needs of all the children and to overcome perceived barriers to learning within the school. The Head Teacher demonstrated a clear vision, supported by the chair of governors, which is that the school will strive to ensure that every child has a positive experience in their life in their Catholic school. St. Mary's school provides foundations that the children will need in their next stages of learning for the rest of their lives beyond education. There has been monitoring of religious education by the school's RE Coordinator and there is clear evidence that the outcome of this monitoring has been acted on throughout the school.

In order to improve further, the Governing Body needs to work more closely with the school's Senior Leadership Team in addressing the school self-review process so that it can be further developed in such a way so that they are an integral part of the process and so are able to provide the necessary support, understanding, rigour and challenge for the school. The newly appointed Governor for Religious Education has planned visits to school during the next term. These visits have a clear focus the overall aim of which is to develop and strengthen governance of the religious life of the school.

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

The school's Mission Statement is known, lived and witnessed to throughout the school. The Religious Education co-ordinator, fully supported by the Head Teacher, Governing Body and Senior Leadership team, has enabled the school to develop a clear vision on how RE should be taught. Her supportive approach enhances the teaching of Religious Education and faith development in the school and provides clear leadership and support for all staff. Teachers place high priority on the teaching of RE which is demonstrated in their planning. As a result the quality of teaching is good, and in some cases outstanding, across the school. This is evident in children's work and their contributions to lessons. Teaching is inclusive, and in a number of cases inspiring, and challenges children of all abilities. Constructive marking is used to enable children to reflect, it challenges and provides good support to improvements in children's learning.

Teachers and teaching assistants have good knowledge and understanding of the teaching of RE. The role of teaching assistants in classes contributes significantly to effective learning in RE lessons.

Pupils' attitude to learning is very good; they show a genuine interest in and enthusiasm for their RE work and can talk openly about topics and themes they have covered. High quality classroom resources are well used by staff. Through well considered activities children are challenged to think deeply on a range of issues, the use of 'Big Question' books enables children to have the security and confidence to ask questions which are difficult and often impossible to answer. However, by asking these questions, teachers are able to guide discussions which encourage higher order thinking skills relating to children's belief and faith. The children are able to develop and express their thoughts in a range of different ways. Children have a good awareness of cultural differences and other world faith traditions.

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

St Mary's provides a very warm, welcoming and inclusive environment where committed staff have high expectations of the pupils. The strong welcoming tradition of the school is maintained through deep faith commitment and a genuine supporting ethos from all staff, children and governors. A shared knowledge and understanding of Christian beliefs and gospel values support the school's distinctive ethos. The school welcomes visitors, parents, and members of the wider community with love and respectful care. This helps to build solid relationships and lasting partnerships. Children who are new to the school are quickly made to feel welcome and valued as members of the school community. One parent was able to say that she had considered a number of schools before deciding to send her child to St. Mary's. One of the main reasons for this decision was that when she came to the school 'as the door opened, the love just poured out'. Staff and children are very happy in the school. They share the love of Christ readily with visitors, communicate very confidently and show a very real desire to involve everyone in the life of the school.

Respect for the dignity of the individual is clearly evident across the school. The caring ethos and the development of pupils' personal qualities are of paramount importance to the staff and Governors.

The school constantly strives to find ways of engaging all members of the community. Staff, children, parents and Governors identify strongly with the school. Parents interviewed stated that how the children were taught to treat one another in school had an enormous impact on the children both in school and within their wider community. Children who were interviewed in the school were able to demonstrate how the older children cared for the younger ones.

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

Staff and children demonstrate a very high level of respect for the care and service of others. Throughout the school there is good practice which allows learners to feel safe and well cared for and to adopt safe practices themselves. There is genuine concern from all staff for the welfare of all children. Within the school there is a positive ethos, the centre of which is Christ as an example for the whole community to aspire to. The children care for one another; particularly the older children and the pupil chaplains who teach younger children how to become prayerful.

Two groups of children were interviewed; Pupil Chaplains and the Pupil Council and both groups were confident speakers. The school Council talked enthusiastically about ways in which they had raised money for a range of charities and the Pupil Chaplains explained how they needed to demonstrate care for one another as part of their selection process.

Whole school responsibility toward others is a strong feature of the school. Children learn that it is important to help others and have compassion for those less fortunate. Staff and pupils are free to express their opinions and know that these will be valued.

Governors and senior leaders ensure that careful consideration is given to supporting the needs of all the children when making budget, staffing and resource decisions. For example, in response to parents' increasingly busy lifestyles and changing family structures and circumstances, the school employs a Family Support Worker, to work closely with families under stress and those who are identified as struggling to cope. This has had a positive impact on families and in particular children, whose attendance has improved. In response to the challenge of a school population of a white British heritage background, the school ensures diversity is promoted through workshops and contact with other schools and organisations.

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

Pupils and staff are confident and skilled in planning and leading prayer and worship which is pupil-centred, creative, inclusive and relevant. Children are given a range of prayer opportunities through which they can develop their relationships with God and pray as a community. The school's Pupil's Chaplains' Prayer Group provides an excellent example of pupil leadership and active involvement in relevant, inclusive worship and meditation. Both this group and the Rosary group are voluntary groups which are well attended. Every child in the school has their own prayer book which they are encouraged to write in regularly. Pupils may, if they wish, share their prayers with anyone they choose, however, children understand that their private prayers are respected by adults and so these books are not handed in for adults to mark or comment about.

Children respond well to collective worship opportunities in school. They are aware of its importance and are reverent in their behaviour. During the whole school Mass many children took part by reading the first and second readings and the bidding prayers and stepping forward to display their Christingle oranges. As they approached the altar, all the children bowed reverently before continuing. All children are encouraged to speak to God in their own special way.

Parents respond positively to how the school offers a good range of opportunities for prayer and worship; they attend whole school Masses which are held once at least fortnightly and more frequently during Advent and Lent, in school. Parents speak very highly of the pupils' reverence and prayerful behaviour at school Masses and when pupils are involved in leading parish liturgies, for example the recent Christingle Mass. All staff have access to a high level of dedicated funding and resourcing and as a consequence the school is well equipped with resources for prayer and collective worship.

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

As evidenced in the paragraphs above, staff and pupils are confident and secure in their witness to Christ, the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. The school encourages and supports its members to be proactive citizens who contribute to the decision-making processes. Gospel values are known, understood and witnessed by all the children throughout the school. Quotes from scripture have been carefully selected by the pupil chaplains; these are displayed around the school and children are able to read them and to identify with their meaning and relevance in their own lives.

An explicit Catholic culture permeates the whole school and is clearly identifiable through relationships, decision-making and actions. The impact of the Mission Statement is evident and tangible across the school community, through the implementation of policies and procedures and the high expectations of all. For example, the school has established a Justice and Peace Group which meets on a regular basis.

The Governing Body is effective in undertaking its role of developing the school as a Catholic community. The school's chaplaincy is well-resourced, relevant and inclusive and has a high impact on the life of the school.

Staff and children clearly demonstrate and witness to justice, compassion, reconciliation, love and forgiveness in their relationships and are able to see the relationship between their own behaviour and Christian values. Parents comment that "You can recognise St Mary's pupils when they are out in the community through their actions and attitudes to others".

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

- For the school self review process to be further developed in such a way so that the Governing Body is an integral part of the process and so are able to provide the necessary support, understanding, rigour and challenge for the school.
- To ensure that teaching throughout the school is outstanding and that children are inspired to learn by the delivery of consistently exceptional lessons.

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2014

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making my visit to St Mary's so enjoyable when I came to inspect your school for the Bishop. I really enjoyed being with you. Thank you for looking after me so well and helping me to feel very welcome. St Mary's is a good school and many areas of what you do individually and together are outstanding.

I enjoyed being part of your lessons and was sorry not to see everyone. Thank you for showing me so much of your work and activities. I could see that you are very proud of your school and all that you have achieved together. I was particularly impressed that you thought that the most important part of your learning and life together was that you care for one another; especially that the older children care for the younger children in your school. I know the Bishop will be delighted to hear this.

Your teachers are really helping you to learn well and I was very impressed by your excellent relationships and good behaviour. It was good to see so much of your Mission Statement coming through everything you are learning; your relationships and the special way you make everyone feel valued and welcome; especially when new children start their school life with you.

It is wonderful to see a school where there is so much respect for one another. This is a true reflection of being part of a Catholic community where everyone is welcome and has a place.

Many of the lessons that I saw were outstanding and your teachers are going to work really hard so that all your lessons will be truly inspirational. Many of you have a very good knowledge and understanding of your faith so this should help you to do even better.

God bless you all and have a really happy term.

Yours sincerely

Mrs. Julie Frazer

(Section 48 Inspector)

## Summary Report to Parents

On 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2014 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

St Mary's is a good Catholic school with many outstanding features. It is very successful in offering its learners a holistic Catholic education in a warm, friendly and supportive environment. The school community, very well supported by the governing body, works very hard to ensure the pastoral and spiritual needs of all learners are met. The school is firmly at the heart of the parish it serves. Positive relationships are evident throughout the whole school community.

The strong spiritual commitment of the Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team, together with the hard work and dedication of the staff, has created a culture in which Gospel values are clearly evident and all are encouraged to "have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Pupils and staff are proud to belong to St Mary's school community. They enjoy coming to school and have high expectations of themselves and others. They are friendly, polite and welcoming and the behaviour of pupils at all times is very good.

The way in which your children care for and respect one another school is a particular strength. The school offers its learners a wide variety of opportunities to develop their talents. As affirmed in its Mission Statement, the school helps all members of its community to "Care, Play, Work and Pray in His Way".

### THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

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### AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

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- To ensure that teaching throughout the school is outstanding and that children are inspired to learn by the delivery of consistently exceptional lessons.