

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Roman Road, Heaton Norris, Stockport. SK4 1RF

Inspection date 27th June 2012
Reporting Inspector Mr. J. Thorpe
Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of school Catholic Primary
URN 106124
Age range of pupils 3-11
Number on roll 139
Appropriate authority The Governing Body
Chair of Governors Mrs Sheila Brearley
Headteacher Miss Catherine Cunliffe
Religious Education Co-ordinator Mrs Gaynor Smith
Date of previous inspection July 2007

The inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	
Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school	2	
The quality of Collective Worship	2	
Achievement and standards in religious Education	3	
The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education	3	
The quality of the Religious Education curriculum	2	
Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education	2	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a smaller than average Roman Catholic, voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford situated in the Heaton Norris area of Stockport. It serves the parish of St Mary, Heaton Norris. The school is located close to the town centre, the local area displays significant levels of neglect and deprivation.

The school has an admission number of 24, there are currently 139 pupils on roll, 26 of whom are in the 40 place Nursery.

There are 7 teachers all of whom are Roman Catholics.

52% of the pupils are baptised Roman Catholics.

32% of pupils are on the SEN register.

1% of pupils have a statement of SEN.

37% of pupils are eligible for FSM.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a good Catholic school. It has a strong Catholic ethos of care and compassion. The school offers a friendly, happy, welcoming atmosphere. The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school is good. The governing body fulfils its role well in respect of its Catholic foundation. The quality and range of opportunities for collective worship is good, but prayer and worship in the classroom need to be developed further. The quality of teaching and learning varies between satisfactory and good, the standards achieved in Curriculum RE ranges between satisfactory and good. The work provided does not always match pupils' ability and does not enable some pupils to achieve their potential. Systems of monitoring and assessment are in place but the findings from these are not yet used effectively to raise the standard of pupils work.

The headteacher, and deputy headteacher, who is the RE co-ordinator, are aware of the areas of strength and those areas in need of development.

The school strives for inclusion, it celebrates diversity, embraces those of other faiths and cultures, it builds pupils self esteem and there is a sense of belonging.

Governors are kept informed of developments in Curriculum RE.

Pupil's behaviour is good, they are well mannered and polite, they show respect for themselves and for others.

The spiritual and moral development of pupils is good, pupils are aware of other faiths and cultures and are taught to respect them.

The caring relationships within the school are strong. There are close relationships with parents, parish, the associated high school and the wider community which includes the global community.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 48 inspection in July 2007 the school was asked to review its Mission Statement in the light of the views of all stake holders. This was completed in 2009.

The production of a portfolio of levelled children's work was begun but work halted due to the changes to the RE syllabus made by the Salford Diocese. The school plans resumption of this work in the Autumn of 2012 based on the guidance given by the Diocese and in the supporting materials of the approved scheme.

Capacity to improve

The school's self evaluation is mostly accurate but there is a tendency to overestimate standards and achievement.

RE has an appropriate place in the school development plan and has associated appropriate action plans.

The RE co-ordinator and RE governor supported by the Headteacher, and all staff and governors are committed to improvement. There is, therefore, good capacity for further improvement in the future.

What the school should do to improve further.

- Raise standards in Curriculum RE by using the data gained from yet to be established systems of monitoring and assessment more effectively.
- Develop a portfolio of pupils' levelled work.
- Further develop prayer and worship in the classroom by increasing the opportunities for pupils to be involved in the composition of their own prayers and liturgies.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good. The Mission Statement lies at the very centre of the school's aims, policies and expectations, it is implicit in all areas of the school. The Mission Statement reflects the views of governors, staff, parents and pupils. The Governing Body fulfils its role well in respect of its Catholic foundation. It has good knowledge of the school through Headteacher reports, reports produced by the RE co-ordinator and RE governor. There is a strong Catholic ethos in the school characterised by Gospel values, inclusion and reconciliation. All staff fully support the many opportunities for prayer and worship in the school.

Community cohesion is supported through a range of opportunities to care for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils and families donate to CAFOD, St Joseph's Penny, a harvest collection for Stockport Women's Aid and other local and overseas needy groups.

The school operates an 'open door' policy which ensures parents are kept well informed about the school through regular newsletters and the school web-site. Parents spoke to the inspector and spoke highly and enthusiastically about the school and were very proud of what the school seeks to achieve.

An area discussed with a couple of parents was the level of involvement in school of the Parish Priest; they felt that the involvement could be greater.

The Sacramental Programme is effectively run from the school with support from the parish. The RE governor is an excellent contact between school and parish and has considerable knowledge of the religious life of the school.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is good in respect of its quality and range. The policy for prayer and worship provides guidelines for the continued development of collective worship. Prayer and worship in the classroom needs to be developed further by giving pupils increased opportunities to contribute their own prayers and reflections and present them to the class.

During the inspection Class 3 presented an extremely well prepared liturgy focused on the Fruits of the Holy Spirit. Pupils had put together a PowerPoint themselves, pupils used mime and gesture, other pupils read and all sang beautifully. Pupils with different cultural backgrounds made contributions.

In Reception class pupils were assisted in developing a prayerful relationship with God through their involvement in making The Sign of the Cross. The worship was supported by all staff who presented themselves as excellent role models for the pupils.

Collective worship is an integral part of the daily life of the school; pupils are clear about what is expected of them.

There are special celebrations throughout the year, assemblies and services that reflect the liturgical calendar, the Sacramental Programme, the RE scheme and support the spiritual and moral development of pupils. There are prayer focus areas in all classrooms that provide pupils with the opportunities for spontaneous prayer and reflection. Prayer focus areas in classrooms are creative, appropriate to the faith journey and stages of development of pupils.

Throughout the school year there is a programme of school Masses in the parish church. This helps school to develop the pupil's awareness of the liturgical year and specific religious feasts. Parents and parishioners are invited to attend all celebrations.

During the inspection, throughout the school, pupils were seen to be listening respectfully to presentations and praying reverently. It was clear from classroom displays and displays around the school that pupils would learn reverence and respect and could grow in confidence in prayer and developing a relationship with God.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in RE are satisfactory. Pupil's attainment on entry to school is below national expectations. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the EYFS. As pupils pass through the Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 the rate of progress is variable.

The wide socio-economic background of the pupils, the varied religious experiences and diversity of beliefs presents challenges for their levels of understanding in RE. Nevertheless, the inclusive nature of the school means all children are warmly embraced into the RE curriculum and they often actively participate.

In some lessons learning objectives were not clear or not fully explained to pupils. Insufficient differentiation and work not matched to the range of ability of groups of pupils produced inconsistencies in teaching and satisfactory learning.

In other lessons pupils are presented with challenging tasks by the teacher based on good knowledge of what pupils need to do to progress. In these lessons expectations are high and the pace of work is good, pupils are engaged.

The quantity, range and quality of written work is satisfactory generally with good work to be found in groups in all classes. Pupils of higher ability are not always challenged to achieve their full potential. The school has identified that accurate assessment of pupil progress is not yet in place.

Evidence from a book scrutiny and lesson observations suggests that pupils would benefit from more modelling of good work, which will increase consistency across the age ranges and between classes. When in place this should enable identification of areas for development in curriculum RE. Targets can be set and used to improve standards.

Learners enjoy their work in most classes and respond well to questioning; they know about the life and teachings of Jesus and are able to apply these to their own lives. The school provides well for the spiritual and moral development of its pupils. Their behaviour during the inspection was very good, they show respect for themselves and others, they show developing independence and responsibility. Pupils are encouraged to serve on the School Council and act as 'Buddies'. The courtesy of children towards each other and adults is very evident.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to good. Lessons observed were well planned and mostly conducted at a good pace to maintain interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment.

In a good Key Stage 1 lesson pupils discussed Miracles and their meaning using the example of a poorly boy to produce a simple prayer to aid his recovery. Pupils were involved throughout and new learning took place, appropriate language was encouraged.

In a good lesson in Key Stage 2 pupils continued learning about other religions of the world and indicated a developing understanding of 'difference' as opposed to merely tolerating it..

ICT is used to support teaching and learning, although on occasions the IWB acts only as a display board.

Most teachers ensured that pupils understood the purpose of the lesson; plenaries are used to evaluate learning.

Work is not always provided that matches pupil's ability. The most able are sometimes not sufficiently challenged and the standard of written work can be raised. Marking is mostly good with teachers taking the opportunity to make pupils aware of what they need to do to improve. There are plans to compile a portfolio of pupil's levelled work that will help evaluate teaching and learning; this in turn will assist the school in raising standards.

Teaching and learning would benefit from the sharing of good practice across the school. There are good professional relationships among staff that should enable this to happen successfully. Lessons were particularly successful when the teaching engaged the children, used ICT, included even limited role play, effective questioning, well prepared resources and differentiation. Learning could be further enhanced by continuous assessment, peer assessment and constant feedback about pupil progress in the lesson.

Pupils in most classes show interest in their work and maintain concentration when working independently or as part of a group.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The RE curriculum is good. It complies with local and national expectations with regard to time allocated and is planned following diocesan guidelines. The school places RE at the centre of all its work and the significance of curriculum RE in the school is highly visible through bright and attractive displays in classrooms and shared areas celebrating pupils' work.

Although the school has relatively recently implemented the The Way, The Truth and The Life, it is evident that a good deal of work has been undertaken to prepare staff and develop knowledge and understanding of the scheme. The school is currently preparing to make the scheme accessible to all pupils by adapting it for mixed age classes. The provision is to be further supported by developing systems of monitoring, book scrutinies and assessments. The provision is successfully complemented by the use of other resources to ensure that teaching is interesting and challenging

The RE curriculum promotes community cohesion through its strong links with the parish community and the wider community by providing opportunities across the curriculum to promote shared values and appreciate and respect other faiths and cultures. Very good relationships exist between school, parents, parish, local schools and the associated high school.

The Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher / RE co-ordinator give high priority to RE, they plan regular INSET activities for staff and provide relevant resources to support teaching and learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum RE is good. Governors are kept informed through Headteacher reports of developments in curriculum RE. The link governor is very active in school and in the parish.

The Resources Committee of the Governing Body allocates sufficient funds to enable staff to deliver the approved curriculum. All staff attend appropriate meetings and training events, RE has time allocated during the annual cycle of staff meetings. All staff and governors are committed to providing an effective Catholic learning environment for all pupils. Staff uphold the Catholic ethos of the school and assist in the creation of an atmosphere of happiness and belonging; there is equality of opportunity for all, and relationships within the school are good.

There is a variation in the quality of teaching and attainment in curriculum RE. Not all pupils are challenged to achieve their potential. Self-evaluation, monitoring, tracking and assessment data need to be used to raise standards by reducing variations between classes, the use of learning targets will be of assistance. The school is aware of these development areas and intends producing a rigorous timetable to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning.

The provision for pastoral care means that children feel safe, they know what to do should they have any problems during the school day. They are proud of their school and appreciate what the school does for them. The Senior Leadership Team is committed to leading by example and seeking ways to constantly improve the RE provision. The Headteacher and subject leader have successfully identified variations between groups of pupils across the school and are about to implement corrective responses.