



Inspection carried out Under Canon 804 and 806  
and in accordance with Section 48 of the Education  
Acts 2005 and 2011

DIOCESE OF SALFORD

Name of School St Paul's RC Primary School, Preston Old Rd, Blackburn BB2 5EP  
Inspection date 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019  
Reporting Inspectors Dennis Harrison, Carl McIver, Helen Arnold

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Type of school	Primary
URN	119649
Age range of pupils	4-11
Number on roll	212
Appropriate authority	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	Derek Hardman
Headteacher	Gary Foster
Religious Education Subject Leader	Dominique Hayes
Date of previous inspection	November 2014
Grade of previous inspection	Good

Explanation of the Grades - 1 = Outstanding, 2 = Good, 3=Requires Improvement, 4 = Inadequate

<b>Overall effectiveness of St Paul's RC Primary School</b>	<b>Overall grade</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Religious Education (incorporating Word)</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Collective Worship</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>2</b>

## CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Paul's is a one form entry RC Primary School in the Feniscowles area of Blackburn. It serves the Oscar Romero parish through Pleasington Priory. There are 2% of pupils on free school meals and 8% entitled to pupil premium funding. 10% have been identified as having Special Educational Needs / Disability. There is little pupil mobility. 3% of children have English as an additional language. 94% of pupils are baptised Roman Catholics, with 60% of staff being Catholic and 2 holding the CCRS. The headteacher was appointed to the substantive role of headteacher in October 2018. The deputy headteacher assumed her role in September 2018.

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

St Paul's RC Primary School is a good and improving school. After a time of turbulence the school has now entered calmer waters. The effective governing board has appointed new leaders who have become a strong team clearly focussed on taking the school forward. The headteacher is passionate about his work and provides leadership that is valued by parents and confidently creates space for other leaders, especially the very effective deputy headteacher, to undertake their roles with skill and determination.

## THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- Wonderful, well behaved children who possess caring and supportive attitudes and a hope to 'achieve beyond their dreams'.
- Leaders, including governors, who have steadied the ship after challenging times. They are ambitious for the school and are highly regarded by parents.
- The positive team spirit that epitomises the welcoming and nurturing nature of St Paul's
- The powerful welcome and welfare that permeates the whole school ensuring it is prayerful, joyful and safe.

## AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Revisit and deepen the mission statement so that it fully embodies the vision of new leaders and the whole community.
- Consistently raise expectations to ensure outstanding outcomes in Religious Education are modelled and celebrated.
- Deepen the provision in Collective Worship by developing independence and confidence as pupils prepare, deliver and evaluate as pupil leaders.
- Create opportunities for outstanding teaching and learning to be witnessed both within school and beyond so that the proportion of outstanding teaching increases.

## THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)

The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)	Overall grade	2
Outcomes - The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school		2
Provision - The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school		2
Leadership - How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school		2

The pupils of St Paul's recognise their distinct Catholic identity and are very proud of their Catholicity. Pupils at this school are happy, confident and feel secure and their behaviour is consistently very good. All pupils are very aware of the needs of the local community and actively seek opportunities to support those in need. The support for the local foodbank is clearly a source of pride for the whole school. All pupils feel well supported by the school and their peers. The 'Seeds and Gardeners' programme is a clear example of this where 'Year six gravitate to a child to support for the year'. Pupils talk about their friends with pride and how they are able to

help and support one another in school. Pupils are very confident in approaching staff for guidance and they feel that they are always listened to. Pupils take great pride in being members of the various Leadership Teams in the school and these teams are having a growing impact upon the Catholic Life of the school. Pupils willingly offer their gifts in service.

The school has undertaken work developing a mission strapline that is meaningful to the community. Many pupils talk about what it means to, 'Achieve beyond our dreams' and there has been a clear, whole school focus upon this. The school is right to want to deepen this mission statement to reflect all the hopes and dreams. Christ is clearly at the centre of this welcoming school. This is highly evident in the quality of relationships between pupils, staff, parents and the wider community. Parents commented about the warm welcome that they were given to the school, the calm atmosphere saying they 'would never consider sending our children anywhere else.' The school is calm and well organised. The Catholic character of the school is well developed and celebrated. The behaviour and manners of the children are impeccable and they offer an authentic welcome to the school. This welcome permeates from the youngest to the oldest child and is consistent throughout the whole staff who are outstanding in their pastoral care and concrete commitment to every pupil. There is a clear focus upon the effective development of moral and spiritual values for all pupils. There are clear and effective links between the school and parish.

Leaders of this school recognise that they are at the beginning of an exciting journey in driving this school towards potentially outstanding Catholic provision. Leaders at all levels clearly have the passion, drive and vision to move this school rapidly forward. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have effectively evaluated the current provision and clearly have a vision and plan for rapidly moving forward. Governors including the valued parish priest are ambitious and supportive of the school. They are actively involved in school evaluation and play a key part in driving forward standards. Parents are supportive and positive. The leadership of this school has resulted in a happy, vibrant and positive environment in all aspects of the school.

#### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word)**

<b>Religious Education (incorporating Word)</b>	<b>Overall grade</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes - How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education		2
Provision - The Quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education		2
Leadership - How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education		2

Overall the outcomes, provision and leadership in Religious Education are good. Pupils enjoy their lessons. They are enthusiastic learners blessed with very positive attitudes and behaviour across the school. They enter school representing the whole ability range. The school is right to focus on opening opportunities to build on its current successes and to raise expectations and progress even further. Pupils acquire religious literacy skills quickly and by the time they reach Key Stage 2 they are thoughtful and reflective about the issues they have been learning about. They consider varying viewpoints and question one another respectfully. They are keen to achieve 'beyond their dreams'! There are examples of excellent work in the children's books especially towards the end of Key Stage 2. This work should be modelled and celebrated around the school and in every room so that all can witness what outstanding outcomes look like and to set a clear path for all pupils to aspire to be the best they can be. These outcomes are often very well presented. Religious Education now has a high status at St Paul's.

Although teaching is good overall it is most successful when the desired outcomes in learning and the quality of work expected are very clear. When this occurs, enhanced by very effective planning, the children become readily engaged and learn quickly. In one very practical Key Stage one lesson every child knew the meaning and origin of their Christingle because they had the chance to create one of their own and to discuss its purpose. In an upper Key Stage 2 class older children were thoughtful and responsive to excellent questioning around the

Annunciation and the Visitation. Next steps in learning are clearly shared in pupil feedback and peer review is becoming increasingly important. There is an emerging passion for Religious Education to be outstanding in its provision at the heart of the curriculum. In order to achieve this in a timely fashion opportunities for outstanding teaching needs to be shared both in school and beyond, so that the best practice positively influences the standards of teaching and pupil engagement, building confidence and pedagogical expertise across the school. Under the watchful eyes of the Religious Education governor Religious Education is moving forward very well at St Paul's. The highly regarded headteacher has created a genuine team approach, giving the Religious Education subject leader the space and time to implement many new initiatives and to encourage her passion for Religious Education. She is an excellent leader setting high expectations with a clear sense of purpose and ambition. This direction of travel can now increase in pace and energy and the school can look forward to many successes in the years to come.

## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

<b>Collective Worship</b>	<b>Overall grade</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes - How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship		2
Provision - The quality of Collective Worship provided by the School		2
Leadership - How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship		2

St Paul's enjoys an atmosphere of calm and respect, conducive to prayer and reflection. The physical environment lends itself to spontaneous prayer with areas to think and spaces where children can pause for thought and ponder. Dedicated staff provide a wealth of opportunity for children to enter into the presence of God through daily prayer and worship. Time for quiet meditation, personal prayer responses and listening with respect and deference to the thoughts and feelings of others are hallmarks of the collective worship at St Paul's. Pupils are very receptive to these opportunities and delight in sharing their involvement in the prayer life of the school through roles such as chaplains, Caritas Ambassadors and class prayer leaders. Close observance of the liturgical year, the use of scripture and 'big questions' challenge children's thinking while laying a firm foundation for their faith development and relationship with God. These experiences produce pupils with a clear sense of their moral and spiritual development. Children take a full and active part in worship in its many forms and are ready to take on the mantle of planning and delivering liturgies with greater freedom and independence.

Celebrating the Catholicity of the school is central to St Paul's purpose and practice. Weekly Parish Masses to which classes are invited ensure that children understand that they worship God as one community. Prayer is at the centre of daily life with classes sharing in daily collective worship centred round Scripture and Gospel readings which provoke thought and on occasion raise profound questions about the mysteries of faith. This provision is enriched by the opportunities for prayer during unstructured times in the school day. The thoughtfully planned Chapel provides a space for retreat and quiet prayer. Opportunities for pupils to direct prayer and reflection are creatively managed, with chaplains spending time in the chapel, considering significant questions of faith. Children listen to Bible stories chosen by the chaplains each day, thereby providing gentle space to ponder and consider the Word of God at their own level.

School leaders have placed great importance on the development of collective worship across the school. Pupils are being nurtured in the next stage of their development in taking their leadership roles beyond their current point. The staff team, driven by the Religious Education Lead, are united in their ambition to create outstanding provision for collective worship. Staff development has been given a high priority through additional training. Recently introduced initiatives have made an early impact and although they are yet to be embedded, it is evident that they have been fervently embraced by the children and staff. The provision for collective worship is richly resourced with time, space and attractive materials that place the school in a strong position for future improvements.