

**INSPECTION REPORT**

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**Inspection carried out Under Canon 806  
and in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

**Name of School**      **St Stephen’s RC Primary, Chappell Rd, Droylsden, Manchester, M43 7NA**

Inspection date      3<sup>rd</sup> July 2018

Reporting Inspectors      Julie Frazer, Claire Harrison

Type of school	Primary
URN	106253
Age range of pupils	3 – 11 years
Number on roll	454
Appropriate authority	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	Bernadette Mattison
Headteacher	Brendan Marley
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Hannah Gibson
Date of previous inspection	July 2013

<b>The Inspection judgements are:</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Explanation of the Grades</b>
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
The quality of Catholic Leadership	2	
The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)	1	
The quality of Religious Education (incorporating Word)	2	
The quality of Worship	2	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

## **CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL**

St Stephen's is a Roman Catholic Primary School with 454 children currently on roll including nursery children. The school serves the parish of St. Stephen's, Droylsden. 78% of the children are Baptised Roman Catholic and 12 of the 16 teachers are Roman Catholic and many of the teaching assistants and support staff are also of the Roman Catholic faith. 7 members of staff have the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies. The school is a larger than average sized primary school and 84% of pupils are from white British heritage, 5% are black or black British African and the remaining 11% are from other ethnic groups. 8% of pupils have English as their second language. The school is situated in an area where there are some pockets of socio economic disadvantage but overall is broadly in line with the national average deprivation indicator. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is higher than the national average; however the school does not have any pupils with an Education and Health Care Plan. The number of children who are entitled to free school meals is above the national average.

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

- **The strong relationship that has been developed within all members of the school community. The positive impact that this has had on the wonderfully welcoming, warm and exceptionally friendly and polite children can be seen throughout the school.**
- **The manner in which the school supports its most vulnerable children. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the needs of these children and their families. They have effective systems in place to ensure that there is a holistic and consistent approach to inclusion for all.**
- **The newly restructured senior leadership team, along with the Religious Education subject leader, have a cohesive approach to ensure that the outcomes for all pupils are improving.**

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

St. Stephen's is a good Roman Catholic school with some outstanding features. It prides itself on being a 'family' and dedicated staff and governors place the needs of each child at the heart of their work. The headteacher's vision is that this larger than average sized primary school should feel like a small school. This has been achieved and is evidenced by the collegiate manner in which the staff work and the impact that this has on the extremely welcoming and friendly children. All the areas for development since the last inspection have been met effectively. The school's regularly reviewed mission statement clearly places Christ at the centre of its work and gives a clear and unambiguous vision that if everyone works together in the school they can achieve their best. Governors are fully supportive of the school and its mission in Catholic education. The school provides an inclusive environment and parents speak very highly of the school. Parents and visitors alike are welcomed into the warm atmosphere that the school provides for all. On the day of the inspection a constant stream of parents were seen in the school entrance and whatever their needs were they were met happily by members of staff. A great sense of care and support for the welfare of all exists within the school. Children bear witness to Gospel Values and they place Christ at the centre of their school life. The introduction of a new scheme of work, along with rigorous monitoring and high expectations, has impacted positively on pupils' learning and their good levels of progress in Religious Education. Children are increasing in confidence in planning for and leading acts of worship and the GIFT team are enthusiastic about this. Senior leaders, with the support of the governing board, have made a clear commitment to provide a Catholic school which places their children at the centre of all they do. As such, St Stephen's is a school where children can grow and develop as individuals within a flourishing Catholic environment.

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

The school's leadership at all levels demonstrates a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education. The governors, along with the head teacher, have recently re-structured the senior leadership team and this is having an effective impact up the whole school and standards are rising. The headteacher has a clear vision in that he wants the school to be amazingly good at everything it decides to do. He wants this larger than average school to have the same family feel about it as a smaller school might have. The school has a deep commitment to meet the needs of all its vulnerable pupils and to this end there has been funding made available for a Caritas social worker to work in school for one day each week. The dedicated

headteacher is very well supported by all staff and governors as well as the parish priest. The school's Religious Education subject leader has made a significant contribution to the development of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school and she has a clear plan for further developments and improvements. The school's mission statement has been reviewed recently and governors feel that regular review is essential to ensure that the Catholic ethos and life of the school is reflected accurately. There are rigorous monitoring systems in place to ensure that Religious Education and Catholic life of the school are effectively reviewed on a regular basis. Governors are an integral part of school life and they have an understanding of the progress that children make in Religious Education.

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

The Catholic life of the school is outstanding. St Stephen's provides a school community in which everyone is valued and welcomed and Jesus is placed at the centre of all that it does. Parents are very keen to say that the welcome that is extended to their children is excellent and that the children are happy in school; they said that any issue or concerns that they may have are dealt with quickly and effectively. One grandparent said that she had sent her children to St Stephen's. On the day of the inspection every member of staff who passed by spoke to the inspectors and the children were extremely welcoming; waving happily to us in the corridors. Each member of the school's community is highly respected and valued. Pupils are proud to be members of St Stephen's; they said that their lessons are fun and that everyone tries to make sure that no-one is left out at play times. There are clear systems and procedures in place to ensure safeguarding and children have a very clear understanding of what to do if they are worried or concerned about anything. All staff and pupils demonstrate a very high level of respect and care for others especially those who are vulnerable and those with additional needs. A Caritas social worker is employed by the school and she has been extremely effective in supporting individual children with emotional needs as well as undertaking whole class activities to promote mental wellbeing. She arrives in school very early in the morning so that she can offer support to members of staff and parents alike. Parents are now gaining confidence in her. Children and staff are confident witnesses to the values of a Catholic community. Christ is placed at the centre of school life and all members of the school bear witness to its mission statement. Pupils behave exceptionally well and understand that they bear witness to Christ in the manner in which they value and respect one another. The school's GIFT Team plays an active role in school life; they are confident in planning for and leading acts of worship.

### **THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word) IS GOOD**

The regularly revised mission statement is understood by all members of the school community as is the overarching principle that if the whole school works together they can achieve their best. The school provides a happy, safe and inspiring environment in which all members of the school community live by the values of Christ. Religious Education is at the core of the core Curriculum and its effect permeates throughout the school. This is shown by the fact that parents say that they choose to send their children to St Stephen's due to its Catholic ethos, nature and supportive environment. The Religious Education subject leader has introduced 'Come and See' to support learning and teaching in line with the Curriculum Directory. Very effective support is being provided for those children who might otherwise have presented with barriers to learning. This is exemplified by the extensive school grounds which include an orchard, a vegetable garden and livestock including chickens and ducks. There are opportunities for children who have emotional difficulties to dig the ground as a way of releasing their anxieties. During the inspection some very good lessons were observed and so the school is now well placed to build on these foundations to ensure that learning and teaching continues to grow. Sacred Scripture is known and understood throughout the school and the Word of God informs teaching across the curriculum. There is clear evidence that children are encouraged to and do ask Big Questions. This was evident on the day of the inspection as two upper key stage 2 classes were observed engaging in a debate as to whether or not the Sabbath should be respected. There was clear evidence of higher level thinking and discussion and the children were empowered to really debate the root of this issue. Across the school the written work in Religious Education books was at least of the same standard as the work in children's English books.

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

St Stephen's places worship and prayer at the heart of its school community. During the inspection some acts of worship that were observed were planned and led confidently by the children. Sacred Scripture was central to the acts of worship which were relevant and inclusive of all the children and staff. Pupils behaved very respectfully and clear speakers kept everyone fully engaged throughout the acts of worship. The children had clearly written their own prayers and these were of a high standard. In one act of worship, children were encouraged to reflect on a 'teardrop of hope'. As a result of the firm foundation and support that the children have been given by adults in the school, the GIFT team are now able to develop and plan for their own acts of worship with good levels of independence. The school is now well placed to further develop pupils' ability to plan for and lead acts of worship independently. Throughout the liturgical year, the school undertakes acts of worship and celebrations which are age appropriate and the school actively seeks to expose the children to and engage them with a wide variety of Scripture readings. The Sacramental Programme is run by the parish and is clearly supported by the parish priest and the school; meetings for parents are held in school and members of staff and governors are catechists. In response to the Manchester Arena bombing, the school has commissioned a mosaic depicting a commemorative poppy and a bee reflecting the adopted image of remembrance for the victims of the tragedy. This is displayed in school and provides a reflective retreat for all children and staff alike.

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

- **To provide opportunities for more extended pieces of writing to support and further develop children's learning in Religious Education.**
- **To further develop pupils' confidence in planning for and leading acts of worship independently.**
- **To further enhance the school environment by increasing the amount of pupils' written work, relating to the Catholic life of the school and their work in Religious Education, displayed around the school.**