

**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**      **Sacred Heart RC Primary School, Kingsway, Rochdale OL16 4AW**

Inspection date      8<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Reporting Inspectors      Damian Harrison, Martin Johnson

Type of school	Voluntary Aided
URN	105828
Age range of pupils	3-11
Number on roll	234
Appropriate authority	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	Claire Kierans
Headteacher	Pamela Dungworth
Religious Education Subject Leader	Pamela Dungworth
Date of previous inspection	26 <sup>th</sup> March 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)	2	
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**

Sacred Heart RC Primary School is an average sized school with maintained nursery provision. It is situated in Rochdale, serving the parish of Sacred Heart. The catchment area is geographically large, including the township of Milnrow and the village of Newhey, although most of the children who attend the school live within walking distance. Despite the number of children eligible for Free Schools Meals (13%) or who qualify for pupil premium grant (26%) being broadly average, the school does have a significant number of vulnerable children and the school's deprivation indicator places it in the first quintile (the lowest 20%). The number of children whose first language is not English is 17%. Most of the children enter school with broadly average ability, although a minority have poor levels of attainment and significant language deficit. The number of children with SEND is 14%.

A high proportion of the teaching staff are Catholic (90%), and currently 90% of the children are baptised Roman Catholic.

The headteacher was appointed four and half years ago and has created a newly formed senior leadership team.

The school works in close partnership with the other Catholic schools in Rochdale.

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

- **The strong and effective leadership of the headteacher and the skilled governing board who know the school well, who together provide the capacity for the school to continue to improve rapidly.**
- **The outstanding quality of welfare provided to the children and families, especially those who are vulnerable or are experiencing troubled times.**
- **This is a highly inclusive school which reaches out to all in the community with an exceptional level of Catholic welcome**
- **The children's genuine kindness to each other and their willingness to point out the strengths, attributes and talents of their friends.**
- **The shared and optimistic climate of the school, rooted in the teamwork of the staff team to ensure the school moves from strength to strength.**

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

Sacred Heart is a good Catholic school with some outstanding features. It is a rapidly improving school because the headteacher and the governors provide strong and effective leadership. The headteacher has a vision for the future which the staff team share and they are working extremely hard, collectively, to improve standards and progress across the board. The Catholic life of the school is a key strength. An outstanding Catholic welcome is given to all in the community. There is a real sense of belonging. The children feel happy and safe and are quick to point out each other's strengths and abilities. Sacred Heart is a deeply nurturing school, where the health and happiness of every individual is valued to the full. Hence, the quality of welfare and care provided is exceptional and this, in turn, promotes a sense of well-being in the positive, optimistic climate in which the children thrive. Central to this is the active mission statement which brings to life the values of the Gospel at the heart of school life. The children are demonstrating an increasingly powerful impact in a range of ambassadorial roles. The Religious Education curriculum is appropriate and developing all the time. The school is looking at ways to provide opportunities for the children to do more challenging and extended pieces of work in Religious Education. Prayer and worship is at the core of school life. The children pray with respect and reverence and are enjoying an ever increasing range of ways to give praise to God. They are well placed to face the challenge of taking greater leadership in their planning of prayer and to be progressively more creative in doing this.

This effective and successful Catholic school, which is ambitious in its plans for the future, serves the community as a genuine place of hope and faith.

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

The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership of the school and she has a clear vision for taking the school forward. She is supported by a leadership team who share this vision. The governing board know their school well and provide a good level of support and challenge. They are an asset to the school with their hard work and deep commitment to the Catholic life of the school. They bring an appropriate level of challenge to the school and so collectively they are ensuring that the school continues to improve in all areas.

An important feature of the leadership in the school is the drive to reach out to the local community and welcome all to its exceptionally caring climate. Teamwork is strong and relationships are harmonious throughout – rooted in the school's active mission statement and Gospel values. School development planning and systems for self-evaluation are systematic and well thought out. Staff are provided with access to training opportunities to support them in their development, including those provided through Salford Diocese.

The headteacher, who is also the Religious Education subject leader, ensures that the curriculum is developing at all times. She monitors standards of work and teaching and learning well. Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education is a key strength and remains at the heart of the school.

The children are developing significant leadership roles themselves and are increasingly able to have an impact on the decision making process in the school through ambassadorial roles such as Chaplaincy / GIFT team, school council, and the eco team.

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

Sacred Heart school is an exceptionally welcoming school. It reaches out to all of its community with open arms, with everyone feeling that they play a part in school life. Parents consistently expressed the view that this is a listening school. One parent who told inspectors that she was from a minority group, described the school as 'all love, peace and unity'. The children love coming to Sacred Heart school because they feel at home there. The long established 'Little Hearts' group provides the initial 'first welcome' as pre-school children, with their parents, experience the importance of Sacred Scripture and prayer as they become part of the Sacred Heart family.

Sacred Heart school looks after the welfare of the children, staff and families outstandingly well. Throughout the inspection examples were seen of the utmost priority being given to the pupils as children of God – with their happiness, self-esteem, mental health and friendships being highly valued. Support for vulnerable children is extensive with the provision of a family support worker, a Caritas social worker / counsellor, a Rainbows group for pupils who experience loss, and a range of highly effective intervention groups. Consequently, families feel valued and supported. This leads to a truly harmonious school, with Christ at the centre, where everyone can thrive in a climate of respect and dignity.

Through its active mission statement, Sacred Heart gives witness to Gospel values in all aspects of school life. It is a 'Rights Respecting School'. It has been particularly successful in bringing together and building the changing school community, with the Catholic life of the school at its heart. It looks outward to support local charities (such as the Rochdale Foodbank) and the children are enthusiastic members in a range of ambassadorial roles. They listen to, and support each other, with a level of respect and friendship which is uplifting and refreshing. Both of the priests in the parish are fondly thought of by the children and they contribute significantly to the broader life of the school.

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

The mission statement of Sacred Heart is brought to life across the whole school community. The children are able to relate what is happening in their own lives to Sacred Scripture, so that Gospel values are at the heart of everything.

There is an optimistic climate in the school in which everyone looks to grow, develop and use their talents to the full. As a consequence, standards are rising across the board and the children achieve well in an extremely nurturing environment.

These improvements are seen also in Religious Education where the curriculum and standards are good.

Teaching across the school is gaining greater consistency. At its best, it features effective planning and high levels of engagement and interest from the children, with a wider variety of learning experiences on offer. This effective approach provides an opportunity for the school to disseminate this good practice to other parts of the school.

Using 'Come and See' as the foundation to the Religious Education curriculum, the children enjoy learning experiences in which Sacred Scripture is placed at the core. Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education is a particular strength of the school and the children are extremely confident in recognising the gifts, attributes and qualities of each other. More can be

done to allow the children to have the opportunity to be challenged with more extended pieces of work which will bring about greater levels of creativity from the children and develop cross curricular links more systematically. This would reinforce the school's wish to place Religious Education at the core of the curriculum.

The headteacher and governing board are strategic and focussed in providing training and CPD for the staff in their plans for school improvement.

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

Many examples of prayer and collective worship were witnessed throughout the inspection demonstrating that the prayer life of the school is strong and valued highly by children, staff and the broader school community. Experiences of worship are broad and varied, and they are planned well to meet the needs of the different ages and backgrounds of the children. Such experiences include Taize assemblies, Rosary groups, class-based worship, class assemblies and Masses. The children pray with respect and reverence.

Much of the prayer allows the children to make thoughtful responses, linking events and ideas in their own lives to Sacred Scripture or through other inspirational people. Some pupil-led prayer was witnessed, showing that the children have a lot to offer here. The school can explore how this can be developed further by allowing the children greater ownership and creativity in planning prayer, using a more varied approach.

The school is developing worship with the introduction of mindfulness, meditation and contemplative prayer. Plans are in place to introduce Lectio Divina to reinforce the links between prayer and Sacred Scripture. Equally, the use of prayer stations is gaining momentum to provide for the children greater variety and engagement in prayer. As the children increasingly gain confidence with this, it will diminish the small pockets of reluctance of the children to participate in prayer through song.

The 'Little Hearts' group allows the children of pre-school age to enjoy their faith journey in school, with their parents, through prayer and the exploration of the Gospels.

### **AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- **To improve the consistency in teaching, learning and feedback to ensure that outcomes are improved for the children by creating greater challenge through more extended opportunities in their work and more creativity in Religious Education.**
- **To build on examples currently in the school of highly effective practice in worship by allowing the children greater creativity, variety and ownership in their planning of prayer experiences.**
- **To develop further the children's ambassadorial roles to increase their active awareness of building community at all levels, particularly globally, in their service to the Common Good.**