

**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 Mark's RC Primary School, Queensway, Clifton, Swinton, Salford M278QE**

Inspection date      9<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Reporting Inspectors      Dennis Harrison and Donna Kiernan

Type of school	Primary
URN	105956
Age range of pupils	3-11
Number on roll	240
Appropriate authority	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	Francine Walsh
Headteacher	Patricia Garner
Religious Education Subject Leader	Caroline James
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 Mark's RC Primary School serves the parish of St Mark's, Clifton, Swinton. There are currently 240 children on roll of which 94% are baptised Catholic. 9% of children are eligible for Free School Meals and 20% attract funding for pupil premium. An above average proportion of pupils have Special Educational Needs or Disability. The proportion with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan is well below that found nationally. The proportion of pupils having English as an additional language is 24%. 6 of the 9 teachers are Catholic.

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

- **The outstanding Catholic life of the school, whereby the highest standard of welcome, welfare and witness is afforded creating the school's special atmosphere.**
- **The honest, thoughtful and skilful leadership of the headteacher.**
- **Delightful children who strive calmly to make their school a joyful place to learn.**
- **The exceptional care provided by all adults creating a safe and supportive learning environment that is highly valued by the children and their families.**

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Mark's Swinton is a very effective Roman Catholic school with many impressive features. The outstanding commitment and passion of the longstanding headteacher, supported by dedicated governors have led to the excellent Catholic life of this school. Of particular significance is the reflective and honest leadership that places the school in a strong position to become even better. Leaders and governors are right to move forward by ensuring the school's self-evaluation states clearly how key decisions impact on how well the school is performing. St Mark's is so welcoming that all who enter the school feel at ease immediately. The school rightly prides itself on the way it cares for the children and their families. They reciprocate by supporting the school in reaching out near and far. Parents value highly the positive relationships that define the school and know there is always a smiling face and an understanding ear when things are difficult. The children are delightful and conduct themselves with pride and courtesy, showing that they are indeed excellent models of Christian witness. The school has embarked on a challenging journey to introduce a new Religious Education scheme that they wish to deepen and extend so that they offer a truly outstanding provision. This will be enhanced further as examples of outstanding outcomes in Religious Education are displayed around the school providing celebration and guidance of what wonderful work looks like. Building on the confidence of pupils in their leadership roles and their impressive attitudes, opportunities to deepen the faith life of every child should now be afforded so that there is greater scope for the children to find quiet moments of meditative prayer where they can contemplate and reflect in the stillness of God's presence. Parents are rightly full of praise for everyone at St Mark's as they feel increasingly valued and involved in the school's Catholic life. As one parent from overseas said after moving to St Mark's, 'After all the years I have found a real welcome here!'

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

Overall the leadership of St Mark's is good with outstanding features. The longstanding and committed headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is pivotal in the school's successes. She is reflective and approachable, always seeking to find ways to help the school move forward with pace. Parents and staff hold her in high esteem and particularly enjoy being a part of the St Mark's team that she has skilfully embedded. This authentic leadership, dedicated to the school's journey in Catholic education, is strong and purposeful and correspondingly places the school in a very positive position as it moves forward. Governors are profoundly devoted to the school having an active and practical involvement in the day to day life of the school. They attend key events and residential trips meaning they get to know the school very well. They are right to develop their role so that it increases in challenge to match the support they offer, especially in how the school self-

evaluates its provision so that the strategic decisions agreed demonstrate clear and measurable impact on the children's achievement and enjoyment of school life. The Religious Education subject leader ensures support is given to the staff as they introduce 'Come and See' as the core scheme. She leads well on how planning and assessment is unfolding using resources from within the school and further afield. The school now needs to compliment this work with rigorous self-evaluation and monitoring. Pupil leadership is emerging well with the GIFT chaplains leading the way with helping younger children, playing special games and being very positive role models for all to see. They are more than ready to extend their role into dynamic leadership of worship so that others can witness how to prepare, lead and evaluate faith experiences across the school.

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

The Catholic life at St Mark's is outstanding. This is because the entire team have committed themselves to creating a happy and safe environment, based on a powerful mission statement, allowing the children to meet God each day. From the moment a person enters the school a warm, supportive welcome is given. This includes visitors, new staff and especially new families who get to know the school very well and feel a sense of ownership. Parent partnership is strong, ensuring mutual support impacts very positively on every child's experience. This inclusive school is treasured by the children who love coming to school, love their teachers and feel very safe because problems are sorted out straight away with a 'friendly smile'. Their outstanding behaviour epitomises the strong witness the school holds for Gospel values. This was very evident in a Key Stage 2 class where the children clearly articulated their understanding of the fruit of the Holy Spirit and how the bridges of friendship can be strengthened. The school is right to be proud of the children as they are a credit to St Mark's, demonstrating kindness, love and support. An exceptional package of support for all identified needs is offered. This ranges from detailed provision mapping for those with SEND to sensitive support for pastoral needs such as Rainbows and school based training for a wide range of medical and health issues. Hence the children reach out to support those in need with equal compassion, helping local and international charities. They have a good grasp of their place in a global community. Importantly this good work is founded on the day to day care that children show one another; as one child commented, 'We follow Jesus by loving everyone here, so no-one feels alone or scared – we just make happiness'. This proves that 'We believe all people matter' is a living testament to the school's sincerity of mission.

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

Religious Education at St Mark's is clearly on a journey towards outstanding provision. The mission statement is reviewed regularly and involves the whole school community. It is visible not only around the school, but also in the schools documentation clearly witnessing that at St Mark's the Catholic ethos permeates every aspect of school life. In Religious Education a new scheme has been introduced very recently and staff are being trained and supported in its delivery. Teaching across the school is good and will be even better when the confidence to extend learning by offering increasingly challenging and stimulating learning activities are the norm. Teaching is best when the children are asked to reflect deeply on the focus of the Religious Education learning objective, to ask Big Questions and to find personal and individual ways of presenting their work. In an EYFS class the children were engaged by excellent story telling that the children really enjoyed, followed by a time of quiet prayer enhanced by a calm and supportive atmosphere. In a Key Stage 2 class children demonstrated defined skills in using the Bible to reflect on the significance of the Ten Commandments where learning was enhanced by skilful questioning to elicit the children's knowledge. The scrutiny of the children's work demonstrated good standards across the school. The next step is to build on these current strengths by modelling examples of high quality work that show excellent presentation, individuality and reflective content so that everyone can see what the best work looks like. This work can be displayed in central areas of the school as a celebration, but also in every classroom so that the display of Religious Education is witnessed by all to be of paramount importance. Developmental marking is emerging and will guide and support the children as they explore ways to move forward to constantly improve. The Faith Journals have a lovely mixture of self- reflection and study of the faith. Religious Literacy is developed in all Key Stages.

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

There is lovely calm atmosphere whenever there is a gathering for prayer at St Mark's. At the beginning of each week the school comes together to share the Word of God usually based on the readings from the previous Sunday. The week is ended with a celebration assembly that is theme based. During the inspection the children demonstrated a high level of reverence and confidence in an adult led assembly examining the care we can give to God's creation. Their excellent behaviour and attitudes were clear to see. The assembly would have been further enhanced by more involvement of the children in the

planning and delivery of the assembly and the presence of parents and members of the community. Later in the day the Y6 and Y3 children shared a prayerful activity outside that showed the commitment of care from older children to their younger friends. The focus on 'prayer stones' sharing special First Holy Communion reflections was poignant and the children enjoyed this very much. As this was their first occasion of sharing this type of activity they say they are keen for this to become more regular. Of particular strength at St Mark's is the role of the GIFT chaplaincy team who meet weekly and confidently lead in their special role and communicate their responsibilities with enthusiasm. The school plans to take an active role in 'Hope in the Future' and is committed to establishing ever closer links with the parish and nearby schools. Pupil leadership of prayer, and the introduction of meditative, contemplative and reflective personal prayer should now be strengthened so that it deepens the faith experience of every child. This should be developed across all age groups ensuring the prayer core at the heart of the day to day life at St Mark's continues to flourish.

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

- **To improve the school's self-evaluation so that it reflects more accurately the scope of the school's provision in the key aspects the 5Ws framework.**
- **To develop further the opportunities for children to deepen their faith experience by planning, leading and evaluating meditative, contemplative worship.**
- **To build on current strengths in teaching and learning so that activities planned in Religious Education challenge and inspire the children even further.**
- **To model outstanding work around the school demonstrating and celebrating the best outcomes to all.**