

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. Mary's R.C. Primary School, Tong Lane, Bacup, OL13 9LS**

Inspection date 11th June 2018

Reporting Inspectors Anne Heard and Brendan Hennessy

Type of school	Voluntary Aided
URN	119662
Age range of pupils	3-11
Number on roll	187
Appropriate authority	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	Diana Doherty
Headteacher	Kathryn Bishop-Horsfield
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Amy Oldham
Date of previous inspection	24 th October 2011

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades
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

St Mary's RC Primary School serves the parish of St Mary and St Anselm Bacup. The school is a smaller than average primary school with 187 pupils on roll. The school is situated in an area of high socio-economic deprivation (in the bottom 10% nationally). The proportion of children receiving free school meals is much higher than the national average at 77%. 12% of children are from ethnic minority groups, with 6% having English as an additional language. 25% of pupils receive additional support for their Special Educational Needs. 3 teachers are Catholic and 8 support staff are Catholic. Two staff members hold the CCRS with 3 other teachers are currently undertaking the course. The school was served a compulsory Academy order in July 2016 and is due to join the John Henry Newman Multi Academy Trust in the coming academic year. There are significant mobility changes within the school year with a considerable number of pupils leaving and joining the school.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- **Leadership is a strength of the school. The dedicated headteacher has a clear vision for Catholic education and is supported in this by senior leaders and a committed and enthusiastic subject leader and governing body**
- **The recently established staff team have a shared vision and are committed to providing a caring and nurturing environment that impacts positively on children's learning and wellbeing**
- **St Mary's school is a truly welcoming place where all, and in particular the vulnerable, are listened to and supported**
- **Children's attitude to school and behaviour for learning have significantly improved, making St Mary's a calm and safe place to learn**

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS GOOD

Historically St Mary's school has experienced several turbulent years due to staffing issues and an inconsistency of approach. It has now turned the corner. Permanent staff are now in place and this has resulted in the school improving rapidly in many different ways. The drive and tenacity of the headteacher has ensured that there has been a dramatic improvement in the Catholic ethos and vision of the school. Governors and staff are united in their determination for St. Mary's to be an outstanding Catholic primary school. Whilst there is still a long way to go on the journey, there is evidence wherever you look that indicates that positive change is taking place. The teaching of the Catholic faith is the core of the core and is evidenced in all areas of the school through displays, an engaging curriculum, relationships and the care and dedication of staff to provide the best for their pupils. Governors are well informed, they are regular visitors to the school and they have a clear and accurate evidence base of where the school is currently at. The headteacher has established a vision for the school which is slowly coming to fruition. The appointment of key staff by the governors is beginning to impact rapidly on standards, behaviour and the creation of a truly authentic Catholic school, where gospel values are underpinning all developments across the school. The 5W's have been implemented in all aspects of school life and provide a good evaluative tool to support the school in moving forward.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS GOOD

Since the appointment of the current headteacher three years ago, the school has been transformed into a truly authentic Catholic primary school. The drive and ambition of the headteacher to improve standards alongside developing the Catholic ethos of the school has resulted in a change in attitude and expectations. During her term of headship, she has ensured that the Catholic aims of the church are established. She has had to deal with considerable staff changes and instability until this current academic year when the staffing structure is solid. The appointment of

two assistant headteachers and the Religious Education subject leader has enabled them, working alongside the dedicated headteacher, to ensure that standards are improving and that every aspect of the Catholic life of the school, Religious Education and worship are given high priority status. This hard working, enthusiastic and determined team now have the opportunity to further embed this work as they strive for St Mary's to become an outstanding Catholic School. The parish priest recognises the ongoing transformation of the school and is fully supportive of the headteacher's desire to provide a strong and relevant Catholic education for all pupils. He visits the school regularly and ensures links are forged between the parish, school and community, particularly at special occasions such as the Sacramental Programme in Year 3. The governing board are a dedicated and enthusiastic group who hold the headteacher to account to ensure rigour and rapid improvement. They have a strong desire to ensure that all within the school community receive a good education with Christ's teaching at the core of everything. They are fully supportive of the senior leaders in their desire to make St. Mary's School a beacon of excellence and a Catholic school that follows in the footsteps of Jesus in all it does. The GIFT team, school council and eco teams ensure that children have a voice and a role to play in moving the school forward. When speaking to the children it is clear that they have been given opportunities to discuss and recognise their feelings, particularly their anger issues, and this has helped them to control these feelings ensuring that the school is a safe and caring learning environment. Leadership at all levels is working effectively together with a shared vision for the school.

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

The welcome extended to all at St Mary's ensures that all who enter the school feel valued and respected. Many parents and grandparents commented favourably about the welcoming ethos that is evident from staff and children. Staff are on the playground each morning to welcome the children and their families. Parents also recognised the care and support they and their families received from all within the school community. St Mary's is a school with many social issues relating to deprivation and asylum, yet on entering the school there is a strong sense of belonging and acceptance. The school provides a haven for all. The school has been invited to become a Lancashire School of Sanctuary in recognition of its caring approach. It offers bereavement support, behaviour and anger support for parents who are experiencing difficulties with their children's behaviour at home. The Rights Respecting Award is a future target for the school. The positive teamwork and effective distributive leadership has created a culture which all staff buy into. They go above and beyond what is expected and have begun to create a truly special school. Previously staffing had been an issue, but the school is now entering a much more secure period of staffing with all current staff being retained for the next year. It is a credit to this new team that their shared approach to the care and support of the children and their families is having a dramatic effect on how the school is now viewed. Parents who previously had taken their children away from the school are now beginning to return as under the new leadership team significant change in the behaviour and attitude of some children has contributed to creating a calm and caring learning environment. The school is now not only teaching gospel values but is truly living them. It is outward-looking and ensures that children recognise that there are others locally, nationally and worldwide who are less fortunate than themselves. Charitable collections of food for the homeless and Macmillan coffee days are just two of the numerous events the school engages in to support others. The GIFT team, school council and eco team are just some of the ways that children have a voice in being ambassadors for change in their world for the good of others. St Mary's School is on an improving journey, where the phrase "What would Jesus do?" inspires all within its community to reach out and support each other and the wider world, in truly living their lives following Jesus.

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word) IS GOOD

The headteacher and senior leaders have established a strong basis for the development of Religious Education, knowledge and skills across the school. They are currently at the stage of embedding "Come and See" (the Religious Education programme) across the school ensuring continuity and progress. Religious Education books are in line with English books, they show care and attention with high expectations a priority at all times. Pupils are proud of their work and a culture of belief in achieving the highest standards is being fostered. Children talk confidently about familiar Bible stories and can recall previous learning. In many of the classes observed, creative teaching and stimulating resources were used with great success to engage the children in their learning. The pupil's behaviour for learning is to be commended as this had been an area for development. Staff are confident in their delivery of Religious Education lessons and children fully engage in these exciting and challenging lessons which are taught in a fun and captivating way. Big

Question opportunities are used effectively across the school to engage children in deeper thinking opportunities. Since the appointment of the current headteacher, the Religious Education of the children has become the core of the core curriculum. The parish priest recognises the progress that has been made so far, commenting that “Catholicity is growing and deepening”. The school is successful in ensuring that all staff receive continued professional development in order to support them in their understanding and delivery of the Religious Education curriculum. The headteacher and R.E subject leader are committed to ensuring that children receive the very best Catholic education they can provide. Year on year the amount of money allocated to Religious Education is increasing, ensuring that quality resources and artefacts are purchased to enhance teaching, prayer and worship. 10% of curriculum time is devoted to Religious Education and this commitment ensures that children are given the time needed to develop their knowledge and beliefs in the teaching of the Catholic faith. They are also given opportunities during other curriculum times to learn about other faiths and beliefs to support them in an understanding of the multi faith communities they live in. St Mary's school has established a strong religious base of which they can be truly proud and sets the path in future years for the school to aim to become an outstanding Catholic Primary School.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS GOOD

Opportunities for prayer and worship are used effectively to engage children and adults in developing their relationship with God. The school recognises it is still on a journey but many systems, a growing knowledge and a deeper understanding of what prayer and worship is, are assisting staff and children to grow closer to God through prayer opportunities. The school provides opportunities for whole school, class, small group and individual prayer times. A lunchtime prayer session organised by the children allows for peer to peer support along the children's prayer journey. The GIFT team co-ordinate this work, and this can be enhanced further in the future as they become more confident in their independence to take complete control of acts of worship and prayer. Each classroom has a dedicated prayer table. Children are encouraged to write individual prayers as well as to know familiar common prayers. Sacred Scripture is used to develop the children's knowledge of Christ's teaching. The Sunday readings from Holy Mass are often used as a stimulus for whole school assemblies and acts of collective worship. Children are encouraged to meditate and sit silently in God's presence. On the day of the inspection the inspectors were impressed at how well the children fully engage in collective worship. They respond appropriately, and all are able to retain a silence and stillness as they silently engaged in a conversation with God. The children's singing during the whole school Collective Worship was exceptional with all children joining in and singing enthusiastically. The growing positive attitudes to engaging in reflection and meditative practice has helped to support the children and the staff team coming together to build on their relationship with God. The prayer life of all at St. Mary's is being enriched and deepened each week. Although still on its journey, the school rightly sees as it's priority to have prayer and worship at the core of each day.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- **To continue to develop Religious Education across the school, including religious literacy, and to seek further opportunities to provide differentiated tasks in order to facilitate greater depth of learning**
- **To continue to embed pupil leadership throughout all aspects of school life. In particular, to provide greater opportunities for pupil-initiated prayer and worship**
- **To continue to monitor and evaluate standards in Religious Education in order to ensure continuous progress from Nursery to Year 6**