

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is a larger than average primary school that serves the parish of St. Joseph's Reddish & part of Holy Family, Denton. Currently there are 492 pupils on roll, of whom 95% are baptised Roman Catholic. Mobility is low and the vast majority (90%) of children are white British and the number of children on the SEND register is below average at 9.6%. The school was formed following the amalgamation of the separate junior and infant schools in 2011. Currently 18% of the children are in receipt of pupil premium.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE: (5 max)

- **The GIFT Team and their profile within school**
- **The school is fully inclusive and caters well for children with varying needs**
- **The restorative behaviour approach is starting to have a positive impact across the school**

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT

Although St Joseph's has many positive features the school requires improvement because the quality of Catholic Leadership, Religious Education and Worship are currently not sufficiently developed. St Joseph's has the potential to be a thriving Catholic Primary School when these issues are addressed. The children are well behaved and the teaching staff are able and enthusiastic. The GIFT Team are a particular strength of the school and their enthusiasm for their role is excellent. This was an area of development from the last inspection and, although the role needs to become fully embedded, it is having a very positive impact on the school. The GIFT Team speak very highly of their school and are very positive about many aspects, especially their kindness to each other and their attitude to forgiveness. However, their views are not reflective of the wider school population where the children are disengaged in many lessons, lack positivity about school and the teachers are not being given the opportunities to enrich their teaching; many lessons lack pace and challenge. Quality training is urgently needed to develop the Religious Education curriculum and Worship particularly, ensuring that Religious literacy is brought up to the required standard. In addition leaders do not have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school can only become good when the school's self-evaluation accurately portrays the school strengths and weaknesses, and when the school has a more accurate understanding of national expectations. Governors are committed and enthusiastic about their roles but they are unaware of the issues in respect of standards and progress in Religious Education and need to be more proactive and strategic when providing support and challenge.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT

Leaders at all levels are fully committed to St Joseph's and the headteacher is successful at maintaining a Catholic ethos in the school despite many staffing changes and the number of newly and recently qualified teachers. In addition, following the amalgamation of the two schools (Infant and Junior) things were quite unsettled but in the last 18 months, according to one senior leader, matters are improving. However, the senior leadership team's self-evaluation of the school is not as accurate as it should be. They could not provide additional evidence that supported their evaluation of the teaching in the school and their monitoring and evaluation of teaching and children's work lacked rigour, challenge and showed a lack of subject knowledge. In addition, when asked about priorities for the school it did not match the priorities highlighted in the school's self-evaluation documents. The governors are quite well informed and the acting chair is particularly astute when reporting that the school's priorities were to further embed Word and Worship in the school. However the Governing Board could not accurately report as to whether the school were addressing these issues due to lack of evidence. Moving forward senior leaders in the school need to provide more training for staff, particularly in developing more creative and quality Worship and by developing everyone's knowledge and understanding of the Religious Education curriculum to ensure standards and challenge are improved. Staff would benefit from seeing outstanding practice in other settings to help them continue on their journey of development.

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

The majority of parents met were very supportive of their 'welcoming, friendly and happy school'. Parents of children with additional needs were particularly pleased with the support given to their children; stating that the headteacher and staff were always available and approachable. Behaviour in most lessons and around school was observed to be good, a view that was emphasised by most parents, although a small number referred to some bullying issues that they felt had not been dealt with. Some children spoken to throughout the day reiterated some of these views but the GIFT Team gave a very positive picture of school in their discussion with inspectors. They told inspectors that their school was a special place because it is a very caring community, where children are kind to each other and are always willing to forgive. The children are very confident that if they have a problem there is always an adult that can help them. They are very enthusiastic about their work and they are a key strength of the school. They spoke very positively about all their charity work, including CAFOD, CARITAS and Harry's Holiday Hideout. They are aware of the school's Mission Statement and stated that 'most of the time' it is lived out. However all other children spoken to informally throughout the day could not refer to it and did not know what it was. The GIFT Team is well resourced, relevant and it is beginning to impact positively on the life of the school. This is being further enhanced by the work of the parish priest who is a regular visitor to school and is well known, valued and appreciated by the children and staff.

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word) REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT

The school's Mission Statement is current and child friendly but the school is not fully successful in embedding it completely throughout school. The GIFT Team are fully aware of it but throughout school other children, parents and some governors are not fully aware of its core purpose. On too many occasions lessons and children's work in Religious Education is below the expected standard and, although there has been recent training for senior leaders, there is no evidence in lessons or work of how the children can improve. Almost all the lessons observed lacked pace, challenge and stimulating resources. Opportunities were often missed to develop learning as too many children were uninspired by the teaching they were receiving. Children in Upper Key Stage 2 were too often given basic 'big questions' which were not fully developed and therefore did not provide the appropriate challenge. The inspectors engaged with the children and through discussion saw great potential to deepen knowledge and understanding; the children have the skill and potential to be developed much more but at the moment their Religious literacy is not being fulfilled. Behaviour in lessons was generally good as was their attitude to learning but unchallenging content sometimes led to pupils becoming disengaged. There are a number of newly qualified and recently qualified teachers in the school and although very capable and enthusiastic they are unclear about the expectations of the Religious Education curriculum. They would benefit from additional training and the opportunity to observe practice in other settings. There is good coverage in the Religious Education books and the school obviously devotes at least 10% of teaching time to Religious Education but the standards in books across the school is not up to expectations. Books given to inspectors showed elements of good practice but other work observed in and around classes lacked quality and rigour. The children are not consistently challenged and the marking in books does not move learning on.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT

The GIFT Team are really beginning to have a positive impact on Worship throughout the school. Their enthusiasm is infectious and they are starting to plan small assemblies where they compose their own prayers; they are rightly proud of their role and achievements thus far. They were observed delivering part of an assembly to Early Years and Key Stage 1. They told the story well, including their own prayers and thoughts but the adults did not give sufficient time to help reflect on the story and momentum was lost. In addition throughout school, quality sessions of Worship are not yet embedded and there is not enough evidence around school of its importance and the status and quality of sessions needs lifting. Senior leaders have attended courses recently but the information has not yet been fully disseminated to all staff. The training and support of staff in preparing and leading worship is insufficient. Some sessions observed were uninspiring and although the children engaged well, opportunities were often missed to have a high level of impact on their spiritual development. Collective Worship sessions observed were too teacher led and therefore lacked input from the children and quality time for reflection. More creativity is needed, not only in the quality of resources but in how the children can be part of and lead their own prayer more often. The children are eager to take the lead, the staff now need to be given the training to help facilitate the next stage in the development of quality Worship sessions.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- **For the Governors Board to develop a more proactive and strategic role when supporting and challenging the school**
- **To develop further Religious literacy across the school**
- **To implement a more consistent marking policy in Religious Education, with specific reference to differentiation**
- **Access further training so staff and pupils become confident in planning and leading more creative prayer and worship**