



Inspection carried out Under Canon 804 and 806  
and in accordance with Section 48 of the Education  
Acts 2005 and 2011

DIOCESE OF SALFORD

Name of School St James the Less RC Primary School, Unity Way, Rawtenstall,  
Lancashire, BB4 8SU  
Inspection date 21<sup>st</sup> November 2019  
Reporting Inspectors Mark Mountcastle, Claire Harrison and Patty Ganley

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Type of school	Primary
URN	119665
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	206
Appropriate authority	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	Clare Atherton
Headteacher	Gary Hall
Religious Education Subject Leader	Janet McIntyre
Date of previous inspection	18 <sup>th</sup> November 2014
Grade of previous inspection	Outstanding

Explanation of the Grades - 1 = Outstanding, 2 = Good, 3=Requires Improvement, 4 = Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of St James the Less RC School	Overall grade	1
The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)	Grade	1
Religious Education (incorporating Word)	Grade	1
Collective Worship	Grade	2

## CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St James the Less is a one form entry Roman Catholic primary school serving the large Parish of St James the Less in the Rossendale Valley. There are currently 206 pupils on roll from Reception to Year 6; there is no Nursery provision. The vast majority of the children are white British and 79% are Baptised Catholics. The percentage of children eligible for pupil premium funding is well below the local and national averages and the number of children with special needs is slightly below the local average. There are only three children who have English as an addition language. Of the teaching staff 88% are Baptised Catholic and 5 hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS). Policy adopted recently by the governing body requires all newly appointed staff to have or commit to completing the CCRS.

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

St James the Less is an outstanding Catholic school with particular strengths in The Catholic Life of the school and in Religious Education. At the heart of the school's significant successes is the high quality of leadership across the school, whereby all leaders are determined to see the school go from strength to strength. The school witnesses to its Catholic mission authentically and as result the pupils feel safe and well cared for and parents offer their heartfelt support. The school is right to wish to extend the role of pupils in leading Collective Worship and to continue to strive for constant improvement as a centre of excellence for Catholic education in the Diocese of Salford.

## THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- Delightful and passionate children who can proudly articulate the Catholic mission of the school.
- Outstanding leadership by the headteacher and governing body which is deeply appreciated by parents.
- The love and support offered to all families by staff who are true witnesses to the love of Christ in their community.

## AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- To ensure staff develop confidence and a deeper understanding of a variety of ways to pray and worship.
- To enable pupils to plan and lead effectively a diverse range of prayer and worship activities.
- To ensure pupils have a voice in the school's evaluation of worship.

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

The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)	Overall grade	1
Outcomes - The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school		1
Provision - The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school		1
Leadership - How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school		1

The children of St James the Less are clearly so proud of their outstanding Catholic school and from the very first minute are eager to share the wonderful experiences they encounter on a daily basis. Every child spoken to by inspectors told them how happy they are and they all feel loved and safe at school. The children constantly strive to help each other and, on an impromptu walk around school at lunchtime, a group Year of 6 children introduced all the children, explaining their roles in school and how they are all friends. They take full ownership of the Catholic Life of the school. The behaviour of all the children observed in lessons, assemblies, at playtimes

and around school was never less than excellent and they are all clear about the high expectations of behaviour and quality relationships. All the staff are fantastic role models for the children and very often go above and beyond to help and support the community and the families within it. Parents are very appreciative of all the staff undertake and are full of praise regarding how inclusive they are; ‘they do everything for everyone.’ Parents feel the staff are all very approachable and the headteacher is a constant and welcoming presence around school. When issues do arise the parents are confident in the school as they always follow a ‘fair process.’ One grandparent summed up the feeling, ‘this school is an extension of family.’ The links between school and Parish are very strong and enhanced by many quality events between the two. The PPTA (Priest, Parents and Teacher Association) have a monthly coffee morning after Mass and the children meet with the older parishioners when they host the ‘Heritage Tea Party.’

The headteacher lives the mission statement of the school and is a very positive role model for all the staff and children. His leadership is a key element to ensure that the Catholic life of the school is central to everything. He is well supported and challenged by a very effective and knowledgeable governing body. The governors are well informed and know the school very well. They are confident in every aspect from curriculum to prayer life and together with the headteacher are clear in what the school needs to do to improve even further.

The outstanding Catholic Life of this school though is best summed up through a recent significant event. Last year an unexpected bereavement occurred. On the day of the funeral parents and governors volunteered to help at school so staff could attend the funeral. The member of staff commented, ‘the support I received highlighted to me the amount of love our community have for each other.’

#### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word)

Religious Education (incorporating Word)	Overall grade	1
Outcomes - How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education		1
Provision - The Quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education		1
Leadership - How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education		1

Pupils at St James the Less Primary School are receiving a high standard of Religious Education.

The Headteacher, with the support of other leaders and the knowledgeable Governing Board, has rightly placed Religious Education at the core of the whole curriculum and has a clear vision for its development. The subject is well resourced and teachers are given very good opportunities to develop their subject knowledge through high quality training. The dedicated Religious Education subject leader gives strong support to her colleagues through planning and team teaching. Religious Education is regularly evaluated and there is a clear strategy in place for the future development of the subject.

Consequently, the curriculum has been completely reviewed as a result of the school’s involvement with the ‘Building the Kingdom’ project. A clear curriculum plan has been developed, encompassing the Liturgical Year, the ‘Come and See’ Scheme and ‘Caritas in Action’. Consequently, pupils are offered lively, relevant learning experiences that really engage them. During the inspection, inspectors witnessed lessons that were exciting, with a variety of approaches to learning, including searching questioning, lively discussions, interesting writing opportunities and scriptural enquiry.

The courses of study are enriched by visits and the presence of visitors in school. Children are given the opportunity to take action such as writing to their local Councillor on environmental issues. Teachers show very good subject knowledge in Religious Education and relate the pupils learning to everyday life. In one lesson Greta Thunberg was used as a role model to illustrate how we can use our gifts, talents and unique qualities to change the world. Children are challenged to express their point of view and give reasons for it. They are extremely confident and articulate in expressing themselves. During the inspection pupils also showed that they can support each other in their learning with purposeful paired discussion and supportive comments about each other during lessons, which was a delight to witness.

Lessons are well planned and appropriately differentiated so that children at all ability levels can make very good progress. Teachers show considerable enthusiasm, skill and self-assurance in their teaching, they have high expectations for their pupils and are quick to praise effort and achievement. Positive behaviour for learning was a notable characteristic; in nearly every case pupils showed their ability to work independently for long periods. Work in Religious Education books is beautifully presented and shows clearly the impact of teachers' feedback on the progress made.

The leaders have developed a consistent approach to assessment since the advent of the Age Related Standards for Assessment for Religious Education and recent advice from the Education Department. The school is tracking children's progress effectively and can demonstrate clearly their progress which inspectors would judge to be above average overall.

## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

<b>Collective Worship</b>	<b>Overall grade</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes - How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship		<b>2</b>
Provision - The quality of Collective Worship provided by the School		<b>2</b>
Leadership - How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship		<b>1</b>

Pupils demonstrate reverence and respect during liturgies and Collective Worship and they clearly enjoy gathering for assemblies and times of prayer. The behaviour and attitude of all pupils in prayer and assemblies is excellent. Pupils experience a variety of prayer styles, such as whole class prayer, hymns, quiet moments of reflection and some personal response. This was seen in the Reception class where pupils were able to talk about God's wonderful world. The GIFT team are developing confidence in planning and leading prayer with the younger pupils e.g. at lunchtime making mini rosaries. Pupils are becoming more confident when sharing meaningful spontaneous prayer.

Prayer is embedded as a fundamental part of the school day. Staff and pupils come together as a community to share and reflect on their faith and personal experiences of God as seen in Key Stage 2 and the 'Tannoy Prayer' - where the pupils deliver a daily reflection. Pupils enjoy writing their own prayers and these are often used during assemblies and during the celebration of Mass. Pupils are enthusiastic about attending Mass and look forward to leading and participating in this special celebration. Liturgical music is used in assemblies and class acts of worship to create a spiritual atmosphere and provide pupils with opportunities to reflect. Pupils join in all hymns with enthusiasm and glee as seen in the whole school assembly.

Staff are becoming more skilled at leading prayer using silence, time for reflection, meditation and other approaches to prayer. Scripture, candles, artefacts and IT are used to deepen the response of pupils to prayer experiences. The school has recently merged the GIFT team and CARITAS Prayer Leaders. They are beginning to have greater influence on the planning and delivery of Collective Worship. However, not enough pupils, appropriate to their age, are given the opportunity to prepare independently and lead worship with confidence. The school recognises that this is a key area for development in the future. Pupils are encouraged to attend weekly voluntary acts of worship. These are very well attended, and pupils enjoy these special experiences, particularly when asked to read aloud during the liturgies. Leaders and governors see Collective Worship as a central part of the life of the school and are committed to its ongoing development. The leadership team plan and deliver quality experiences of Collective Worship and are able to make links across a variety of themes and reinforce the teaching of Christian values. Leaders recognise that some staff are more confident than others when planning and delivering Collective Worship and as a result they have ensured that all staff receive appropriate training and support according to their personal needs. Leaders ensure that the school has access to high quality resources which are updated regularly as evidenced in all class prayer focal areas.