

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 Christopher's RC Primary School, St Christopher's Road, Ashton-under-Lyne OL6 9DP**

Inspection date 25th May 2018

Reporting Inspectors Dennis Harrison, Lesley Pemberton, Ruth Vayro

Type of school	Primary
URN	106256
Age range of pupils	3-11
Number on roll	254
Appropriate authority	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	Giovanna Carter
Headteacher	Ian Noone
Religious Education Subject Leader	Lucy Mulhall
Date of previous inspection	July 2013

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)	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 Christopher's RC Primary School is situated in Ashton-under-Lyne and serves the parish of Holy Cross and St Helen. There are 254 pupils on roll. The number of children entitled to Pupil Premium is 13% and the number of children on Free School Meals is 6.6%. These are significantly below the national levels. There are 22% of children with EAL and 5 children have an EHC Plan. Children start school with ability that is broadly average and represents the full ability range. There are 8 Looked After Children. 89% of pupils are baptised Roman Catholic. 64% of staff are Roman Catholic and 5 have achieved, or are in their final year, of the CCRS. The headteacher was appointed in September 2013, after having served the school as deputy headteacher prior to this. The current deputy headteacher, who is also Religious Education subject leader, was appointed in September 2013.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- **The wonderful, family atmosphere of the school that is the foundation of a joyful and safe experience for the children.**
- **The outstanding welcome given to all and the Christ-centred loving care witnessed within the school and beyond its gates.**
- **Exceptionally strong relationships with families and the approachable nature of staff.**
- **Happy, smiling children who behave so well and are ready to meet the future with enthusiasm.**

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Christopher's RC Primary School is a good school with outstanding elements in the Catholic life of the school. Devoted leadership from the headteacher and the newly appointed senior leadership team has seen the school become very effective, especially with regard to the school's statutory outcomes. Now is the time to build on the school's significant strengths and firmly focus school improvement on ensuring all areas of Catholic provision are outstanding. The school is highly regarded within its community and has established very positive relationships with parents. This is because they value the wonderful welcome they receive and appreciate the family atmosphere where their views are heard and respected. The children love being at St Christopher's and want to be a part of its successful traditions. They love their teachers and consequently behave beautifully, share excellent friendships and create great memories. They reach out to the less fortunate with kindness and empathy, ensuring their actions become a family project. The children's work in Religious Education is good overall and benefits from consistent guidance from their teachers. It will become even better when opportunities for challenge and creativity are realised and children are set free to produce independent, thoughtful and reflective work of the highest standard. This should be prominently displayed so that excellent work is modelled for all to see. Similarly the children benefit from some lovely times of whole school celebration of talents entwined with quiet times of prayer. They enjoy their individual prayer journeys and are ready to enhance this even further by taking a pivotal role in preparing these special moments. They want to learn how to deliver times of prayer and worship confidently hence enhancing their impact as pupil leaders, helping other children to be close to God in many ways. Based on the strong team ethic, high quality leadership and excellent attitudes of the children the school is on course to be a formidable example of superb Catholic education.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS GOOD

Catholic Leadership at St Christopher's has many strengths. There is no doubt that there is a fierce determination to make St Christopher's RC Primary School a highly successful school. The Governors are very committed to the school and involve themselves fully in the day to day life of the school providing support to key leaders. They have a keen sense of ownership of the school. The headteacher provides purposeful leadership that has focussed on achieving very high standards in national tests. He has created a strong learning culture and ensured that the school is a very welcoming community, highly regarded

by parents and carers, with a wonderful sense of togetherness. He is a reflective leader, open to new ideas and determined to make the school the best it can be. The Religious Education subject leader is new to her role and, together with the headteacher, they see that the next steps for the school being paramount as they strive towards an outstanding provision in all aspects of the school's Catholic mission. Governors, using the skills and vision within their midst, will need to provide greater challenge to hold leaders to account and, in turn, leaders must be accepting of the challenge that emerges. This will inspire a shared energy to ensure the faith life of the school takes on a renewed centrality, with Religious Education at the core of the core of the curriculum and where children experience a profoundly rich experience of Worship activities that will allow them to meet God each day in a special way. The outstanding aspects of the school's Catholic life in Witness, Welcome and Welfare already provides a superb foundation for this to happen and when achieved, there will be even more to celebrate!

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

It is a joy to experience the special atmosphere that has been created in this happy school! The community is empowered by this gift of welcome as it has created a sense of belonging and ownership. Parents are delighted that their children attend St Christopher's and support the school in many ways especially in attending school events in large numbers and supporting the school's extensive programme to support others, both near and far. These include work to support CAFOD, Cornerstones and St Joseph's Penny. They particularly value the family feel to the school whereby everyone is loved and valued. They note that it is increasingly inclusive – with one parent commenting, 'This school embraces the whole child, the whole family with great warmth – and I am from a different faith!' The children love coming to school and say the best thing about St Christopher's is the teachers and those who care for them. They behave very well around school and are confident, articulate young people. They create strong, positive, friendships whereby older children care for the younger ones in a sensitive way. As one child commented, 'this is the best school there is and I know when I leave I will have lots of great memories to last forever!' The school enjoys its special relationship with families when children undertake the Sacramental Programme that is led by staff and the parish catechists. The parish priest visits school on a regular basis and is devoted to the school, seeing the school as a central part of parish life. The children enjoy his company as he is 'funny and friendly'. The mission statement of the school sets a clear direction for the school. Hence the children are proactive citizens, with the GIFT team and Caritas ambassadors basing their work on 'Faith, Friendship, Kindness and Courage.' The school gives witness to Gospel values in a warm and sincere way leading to exceptionally positive relationships, a joyful and safe experience for the children and a strong culture of loving care within the school and beyond its gates!

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word) IS GOOD

At St Christopher's the school's mission statement is central to school life, having been enriched recently to incorporate the 'Faith, Friendship, Kindness and Courage' strapline. Although created a number of years ago, leaders feel it is as relevant and important as when it first emerged. The standards achieved in Religious Education across the school are good. This is evident in the children's work which on many occasions is well presented, consistently marked and age appropriate. The long term planning for Religious Education needs to ensure that Word is of paramount importance, afforded a central and intrinsic element of school improvement planning, astutely monitored by leaders and challenged rigorously by governors. This is because the quality of teaching of Religious Education, although good overall, lacks a little confidence at times. It does not always encourage the children to think deeply about their learning, to present outstandingly thoughtful and imaginative work and open pathways for outcomes of the highest order to be celebrated around the school. When teaching is at its best it engages the children and asks them to reflect deeply on their faith life. For instance in an Upper Key Stage 2 class the children experienced a challenging drama activity. Two adults performed a drama activity comparing the young lives of a Christian child and a Muslim child. It was thought provoking and the children responded with thoughtful and empathetic questions. The children's attitude to learning is very positive and they behave very well. The school is right to want to develop Big Question opportunities and to ensure there is creativity and challenge in lessons. This will pave the way to higher expectations, stimulating learning and personalised, individual outcomes in the children's books so that outcomes are consistently impressive in all classes. The school intends to introduce a new SRE scheme very soon and this has been through a consultation process with parents. In essence, St Christopher's has an excellent foundation to move forward rapidly to

achieve the very best, very soon. The excellent team spirit, highly defined leadership skills and the passionate commitment of governors places the school positively as it moves towards outstanding.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS GOOD

The school community gather together regularly to celebrate all that is special about St Christopher's. Parents and friends of the school are warmly welcomed and they thoroughly enjoy witnessing the loving care bestowed on the children, the supportive culture and the exceptionally harmonious atmosphere. In whole school assemblies gifts are celebrated, stories are shared and moments of prayer impact positively on the spiritual development of the children. There is also time for special, quiet whole school reflections that are enhanced by a judicious choice of music, prayerful calmness and thoughtful planning and preparation that allows the children to feel the presence of God within. In classes the teachers prepare times of quiet prayer. Currently the role of adults in the preparation of these moments is dominant. However, the children are ready to take the lead with these prayerful moments so that they become highly confident in preparing a wide range of traditions or prayer that involve a high level of creativity and cross curricular dimensions. Such ownership will enhance their engagement as they sit in the presence of God. The school invests appropriately into resourcing this area of provision and provides good opportunities for the staff to undertake relevant training that is beginning to have a positive impact. The planning of Worship should be enhanced so that the children become skilled at accessing Sacred Scripture, can plan independently and review a variety of forms of Worship.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- **For leaders at all levels to work together to raise the status of Religious Education so that it becomes an outstanding area of provision.**
- **Further develop the teaching of Religious Education and ensure there is creativity and challenge in lessons.**
- **Increase the opportunities for outstanding work in Religious Education to be modelled and displayed around the school.**
- **Enhance the school's provision in Worship so that the children deepen their prayer life by planning independently, sharing and reviewing a variety of forms of prayer and worship.**