

**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. Sebastian’s Roman Catholic Primary School  
Douglas Green, Pendleton, Salford, M6 6ET**

Inspection date      27<sup>th</sup> November 2018

Reporting Inspectors      Anne Heard, Patty Ganley, Louise Frize

Type of school	Primary
URN	105936
Age range of pupils	3-11
Number on roll	228
Appropriate authority	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	Caroline Boldrini and Joanna Atherton
Headteacher	Amanda Donoghue
Religious Education Subject Leader	Jess Taylor and Natalie Lomax
Date of previous inspection	5 <sup>th</sup> December 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
Catholic Leadership	1	
The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)	1	
Religious Education (incorporating Word)	2	
Collective Worship	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

## **CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL**

St. Sebastian's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School serves the parish of St. Sebastian's, St Boniface's and St Thomas', Salford. There are 228 pupils on roll, including a 30-place nursery. 111 pupils are baptised Roman Catholic, 96 are Christian and 22 are of other faiths. 9 of the teaching staff and 12 of the support staff are Catholic. 41% of pupils are entitled to free school meals with 56% being eligible for pupil premium funding. 31% of children have English as an additional language. Children enter the nursery at below or significantly below age-related expectations. The current headteacher took up post in September 2017. Previous to this, the school had received an Ofsted grading of Requires Improvement in March 2017. Since then, there have been several changes in significant management roles in the school which are impacting positively on staff morale and outcomes for children.

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

- **The spiritual leadership of the aspirational headteacher in demonstrating a deep commitment to the church's mission in education**
- **The shared vision and teamwork of governors, staff, children and parents in realising their dream for the school**
- **The exceptionally high standards of behaviour, care and nurturing of each other demonstrated by the children**
- **The range, quality and creativity of prayer and worship opportunities**

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS GOOD**

St. Sebastian's school has been on a positive journey of school improvement over the past 15 months under the inspirational direction of the head teacher whose strong faith, commitment and aspirations to create a beacon of Catholic education is evidenced in every aspect of school life. A transformation is underway that will ultimately lead to this school achieving outstanding status. The headteacher, with the support of governors, senior leaders and Religious Education leaders, has a vision for the school where all children will be given the opportunity to reach their potential. By witnessing to Gospel values the school provides its pupils with a strong sense of social justice, so that they can be the 'hands and feet' of Christ, following his teachings to affect positive change in the world. Pupils are shown how to establish positive relationships with each other and credit must be given to their outstanding behaviour. The welcome outstretched to all at the school provides an outstanding basis on which everything else is established. The family atmosphere identified by a parent underpins the caring, nurturing and Christ-centred approach of staff and pupils. Children and their families are thriving in this safe and truly Catholic environment. Consequently, this then supports them in being outward-looking in support of vulnerable groups locally, nationally and globally. Staff and children at St. Sebastian's walk in Christ's footsteps. Staff have high aspirations for the pupils and similarly, children are being given opportunities to have high expectations of themselves because they are children of God and know of his love. The variety and forms of prayer and worship experienced by and sometimes prepared by the pupils are providing children with opportunities to develop their relationship with God in welcoming him into their hearts and minds. Religious Education is the core of the core.

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

Leadership at all levels is outstanding. The headteacher has driven change since she took up post in September 2017. Her aspiration for the school is very quickly coming to fruition. Her mission to provide the best education possible for the children is rooted in her vision of delivering an outstanding education to all, based on Gospel values. She has established a strong and effective leadership team, inspiring others to join her, with Jesus at the heart of all that they do. "Leadership is led by the spirit and is of God." The headteacher is a respected leader who has a clear vision and has worked to develop a strong and effective team around her. The governors are committed to fulfilling their roles, they are knowledgeable and hold the school to account. They have fully supported the leadership in their quest to be an outstanding Catholic primary school and have

fully embraced the pace of change that the school has embarked upon in the last 15 months. Governors fully immerse themselves in the life of the school, attending staff retreats, assemblies, pupil liturgies and conduct regular learning walks. They are proactive in their desire for the school to improve and become a beacon for Catholic education throughout the Diocese. Pupil leadership is strong at St. Sebastian's. From an early age, children are given responsibilities in order to develop their sense of duty to serve others. These roles include school Chaplains, school council members, Mini Vinnies, E-cadets, play leaders, head boy and head girl. The children talked enthusiastically about their roles and throughout the inspection examples were witnessed of groups of children carrying out specific roles autonomously. Children have a strong sense of identity at St. Sebastian's. They are nurtured and developed throughout their school years to find and use their voice and their talents in a way that serves Christ's mission.

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

St Sebastian's has been transformed at all levels. New leadership has resulted in the school truly witnessing to Gospel values in all that happens there. The children demonstrate a clear understanding of their ability to affect change in their own lives and the lives of others by carrying out acts of social justice, fundraising and supporting vulnerable groups within their locality, as well as being proactive in support of others across the world. The staff act as positive role models; their care, nurturing and support for the children and their families results in positive relationships fostered among the children. Respect and acceptance of each other is clearly evident. Jesus Christ is at the centre of this school community. A sense of belonging is palpable in all areas of school life. The parents feel valued and welcomed. Parents of other faiths talk positively about how they play significant roles in the school. One parent commented: "This is not just a school, it is one big family. There are strong structures and it's very organised, but it has such a warm, family atmosphere." There are clear systems in place to support vulnerable children and their families. The staff get to know the pupils exceptionally well and through this they are able to support and nurture individuals and groups of children. On entry, some children are well below expectations for their age group but are seen to flourish as they move through the school. On the day of the inspection, intervention activities and an assembly gave children the opportunity to explore what it means to be a refugee and to gain empathy for others. Big questions are used such as "Does love make a difference?" to engage discussion and provoke the children to deeper thinking. Staff have undergone training e.g. attachment training, in order to meet individual pupil's needs. The school works alongside outside agencies such as CAMHS, speech and language therapists and educational psychologists to ensure children's needs are best met. The Spiritans and Just Youth are regular visitors to the school, providing another dimension to the work carried out in school. Within school, the use of nurturing, relaxation techniques and social and emotional programs are used effectively. The school has begun the process of becoming an emotional friendly school and a school of sanctuary. The welfare of staff is paramount. The true spirit of teamwork and support of each other was evidenced throughout the inspection day. The headteacher reminded the children in the pupil-led liturgy that they were the 'hands and feet' of Christ and it is clear from the evidence gathered that this is truly witnessed at St Sebastian's. The Catholic life of this school is truly rooted in Gospel values which are lived out each day by the whole school community.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word) IS GOOD**

In the past 15 months, St. Sebastian's school has seen a dramatic and positive journey of school improvement which has been rooted in developing the distinctive Catholic ethos of the school. Senior leaders and Religious Education leaders have begun a journey to revitalize the Religious life and nature of the school. In a short period of time they have driven change at a pace and significant improvements have taken place. Sacred Scripture is known and witnessed to by the children. They are confident to talk about the Bible and when interviewed were able to engage in conversations about how the Bible was put together and named numerous and diverse stories and quotations from it. The pupils take great care and pride in their Religious Education work books. They enjoyed their lessons and used some of the following words to describe them: "Amazing", "Fascinating", "Great", "Useful". The children were enthusiastic and eager to engage in conversation with the inspectors and shared a good knowledge of Sacred Scripture, Gospel values and how the school's Mission statement reflected how they live their lives. All stakeholders have been invited to participate in drawing together a new Mission statement and this was known by many. Religious Education is truly the core of the curriculum at St. Sebastian's. The curriculum "Come and See" is used alongside the Religious Education Curriculum Directory to

ensure that all requirements are met. Caritas in Action is also used to enrich pupils learning. The school timetables ensure that at least 10% of curriculum time is given over to the teaching of Religious Education. Resources are plentiful; each class has its own set of Bibles and there was further evidence from artefacts, signs and symbols around the school, that there is a clear financial commitment to purchasing appropriate, creative and current resources to meet the needs of all pupils in the teaching of Religious Education. Inspectors witnessed some outstanding teaching during the inspection, but this is not yet consistent across the school in order for it to be outstanding. Similarly, marking and feedback is not yet consistent, although the presentation and high expectations of pupil's work signifies that St. Sebastian's journey to be an outstanding Catholic school is a goal that can be achieved in the future.

### **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IS OUSTANDING**

Opportunities for worship are highly developed and embedded within the school calendar and liturgical year. Inspectors observed some outstanding opportunities for prayer, worship and reflection. Pupils are encouraged to develop a relationship with God from an early age and this continues to be fostered and nurtured throughout a child's life at St. Sebastian's. Meditation is used effectively throughout the school to encourage pupils to listen to "the still, small voice within." Pupil chaplains and other groups are able to plan and deliver acts of collective worship that have Sacred Scripture at the core. They have a rich and diverse range of resources to use. Classroom altars and focus tables provide rich and varied opportunities for prayer and reflection. Lectio Divina is experienced in each class and inspectors observed a quiet, reflective atmosphere in which children's responses were very thoughtful. The Mission statement - "Keeping Christ at the heart of all we do" - is reflected in this worshipping community. Staff gather for prayer opportunities before meetings and briefings, and similarly, governor meetings always begin with a prayer. Throughout the week, staff, pupils, parents and governors are immersed in a wide and varied timetable of prayer and worship opportunities - in some the Sunday Gospel reading is the focus, and in others it is a pupil-led liturgy or act of collective worship. Expectations of pupils are high, and children rise appropriately to the challenge. Throughout the inspection day, creative, emotive and prayerful experiences were observed which provided a rich tapestry of the high quality of prayer and worship the children and adults experience on a regular basis. Children have prayer partners who they meet regularly. Opportunities for individual prayer and prayer boxes are available around the school. Children's own written prayers are displayed in creative and thoughtful ways. In October and May, children are identified as prayer angels and they take home rosary beads to pray with their family at home. Parents are invited to attend class assemblies and masses each week. St. Sebastian's school community is a praying community immersed in Gospel values with Christ at the centre of all they do. Governors and staff are provided with opportunities for meditation and prayer during Advent and Holy Week, allowing the whole school community to develop their relationship with God. The parish priest plays a pivotal role in supporting the children and their families on their faith journey.

### **AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- **To continue to embed the teaching of curriculum RE and to ensure consistency in teaching and learning**
- **To continue to embed the Sex and Relationships policy and practice**
- **To develop a prayer area in the outdoor provision**