

**INSPECTION REPORT**

**Our Lady of Grace Roman Catholic Primary School, Highfield Road, Prestwich, M25 3AS**

Inspection date 29<sup>th</sup> June 2017  
 Reporting Inspector Mrs Anne Heard  
 Mr Andrew Sowerby

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Primary  
 URN 105345  
 Age range of pupils 3-11  
 Number on roll 444  
 Appropriate authority The Governing Body  
 Chair of Governors Mr Tom Allerton  
 Headteacher Mrs Alison Casey  
 Religious Education Subject Leader / Head of RE Mrs Alison Casey  
 Date of previous inspection November 2012

<b>The Inspection judgements are:</b>	<b>Grade</b>	Explanation of the Grades  1 = Outstanding  2 = Good  3=Requires Improvement  4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The quality of Word	1	
The quality of Welcome	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	1	
The quality of Witness	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

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

Our Lady of Grace is a large Catholic primary school serving the parish of Our Lady of Grace, Prestwich. There are 444 pupils on roll. 100% of the children who attend the school are baptised Catholics. All the teachers are Catholics, 12 of whom have the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have both successfully completed the Catholic Leadership programme. 80% of teaching assistants are Catholics. Attendance at the school is 96%. The school has a very stable community and is oversubscribed. 7% of pupils have English as an additional language. 14% of children are eligible for pupil premium. The school is currently undergoing a large building programme which will provide a new EYFS unit for 90 children and is due to open in September 2017.

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

Our Lady of Grace is an outstanding Catholic primary school; the leadership team have a clear focus on ensuring that all children reach their potential in a caring and supportive environment. High expectations underpin the school's ethos in all subject areas, but the welfare, care and support of children and their families are equally high priorities for the school. The exceptional leadership of the school is led and driven by the hardworking and enthusiastic headteacher. The headteacher is supported well by the deputy headteacher and they work collaboratively alongside the governing body and parish to create a strong, focused approach to providing the very best they can. The school's mission statement encompasses work, worship and witness in a truly Catholic, caring environment. The quality of teaching is very high with many examples of outstanding teaching and learning. The children make excellent progress throughout all Key Stages of the school. Teaching in religious education is creative and ambitious. Children show pride in their work and their books show quality and quantity. The children are articulate and respectful, they enjoy coming to school and are proud of all the opportunities and responsibilities they are provided with.

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

- The hardworking and enthusiastic headteacher and deputy headteacher have a vision for the school that is a true reflection of a Christ-centred Catholic environment, where all are valued for their uniqueness in the eyes of God
- Leadership at all levels including the strong and effective governing body
- The outstanding pastoral care given to all in the family of Our Lady of Grace school
- Inspiring acts of collective worship, often planned and led by the children, which allow all who participate in them to a greater awareness of the love of God
- The dedicated support of the parish priest, who has played a pivotal role in fostering outstanding relationships between home, school and parish

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

The senior leadership team have a shared vision to provide a truly Catholic education for the children who attend Our Lady of Grace School. They work tirelessly to ensure that the uniqueness of each child is recognised and celebrated and as such that they should be given the best opportunities the school can offer. They are excellent role models to the other staff and children, and have created a warm, nurturing school where children thrive in a Christ-centred environment, as they learn to love and grow following the gospel values. The strong and effective governing body is well informed and challenges and supports the school in constantly striving to be the best they can be. This shared vision provides for a collaboration of ideas and effective dialogue in moving school improvement forward. The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and acts as a strong conduit for developing positive relationships between school, home and parish. He is very well respected and has an uncompromising desire to provide a truly Catholic education for all. Middle leaders throughout the school take their roles and responsibilities seriously. The school ensures that all staff

are provided with the appropriate professional training and development in order for them to be prepared for teaching in their present roles, but also offering development for staff to prepare for future roles. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have completed the Catholic Leadership programme and 12 members of the teaching staff hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies. The children at all Key Stages are a credit to the care, support and guidance given to them by the whole staff team. The older pupils are proud to take on a variety of roles and responsibilities; they act as role models for younger children, their excellent behaviour and attitude to learning ensures that younger children develop positive attitudes by following their example. The GIFT chaplaincy team, alongside other child-centred groups, provide examples of witnessing to the teachings of Christ.

### **THE QUALITY OF WORD IS OUTSTANDING**

The school has recently adopted the 'Come and See' programme of religious studies, and from the Early Years to Year 6 classes, opportunities were witnessed by the inspectors of how children develop their knowledge and religious literacy in a creative and exciting way. Religious education is at the core of everything that happens within the school, it has high priority and this was evidenced in the children's books and attitude to learning. A sense of pride in their work was clearly evident. The children were able to recall previous learning about their faith and use this knowledge to consolidate and support their future learning. Older children confidently use bibles and are constantly given opportunities to reflect on specific quotes from Scripture. The main corridors around the school display artwork carried out by each class, related to the lives of the Saints; a different focus is taken on a regular basis and all classes contribute to this whole-school initiative. The development of each individual member of the school on their faith journey is carefully addressed by differentiated approaches to learning in order to meet the needs of both individual and groups of children. On the day of the inspection children observed showed clear evidence and knowledge of bible stories about Jesus as a healer. The session was well structured; it provided challenge and effective differentiation. A similar level of challenge and dialogue was seen in other classrooms. The expertise of teaching assistants ensures that high quality support for individual and groups of children provided them with the opportunity to access the RE curriculum at their own level. Age appropriate learning opportunities were provided across the school. Pupils' behaviour for learning was excellent. The enthusiastic and reflective teachers and teaching assistants ensure that pupils' religious knowledge is developed and enriched by the careful planning and delivery of stimulating and challenging learning experiences. Parents talked about how the teaching of religious education, 'is intertwined with everything they do. Children enjoy RE because it is related to life'.

### **THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING**

On entering the school you are greeted by a warm welcome from members of staff. There is a strong sense of teamwork, where all members of the school staff are recognised for the unique role they play in making the school an outstanding, welcoming community. Parents spoke very positively about how the school is supporting them in helping to bring up their children in the Catholic faith. Parents feel valued; they are well informed and invited to many events, Masses, assemblies, etc. They talked about how the staff have created 'a community in school', and excellent relationships are fostered between parents and staff. They also talked about teachers always being available and how the staff do a 'brilliant job in the transition to high school' and that all staff nurture the children as they progress through the school. Following the teachings of Christ, the school has ensured that opportunities are provided and additional resources purchased so that all groups of children fulfil their potential. Positive and creative ways are explored to provide life enhancing experiences for children attending the school. Staff at all levels go the extra mile in witnessing to the gospel values to ensure that everyone connected with the school feels valued and appreciated for their uniqueness in the eyes of God. Everyone wants to help and support the family of Our Lady of Grace. Staff act as excellent role models in fostering positive relationships and children in turn adopt similar relationships towards each other. The school welcomes a variety of visitors and at all times procedures for visitors are adhered to; the safeguarding of pupils and staff is paramount. Policy and procedures are effective and children talk confidently about feeling safe and secure in school. The children themselves are welcoming and act as buddies to children entering the school in the EYFS department. The exceptional strong links between parish, school and parents provides the foundations on which the school has built outstanding relationships in welcoming, valuing and knowing all who enter this special school.

### **THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING**

The gospel values are alive and witnessed to every day at Our Lady of Grace school. Every person is respected and cared for. The school is very proactive in supporting children and families who are experiencing difficulties. The services of an art therapist are used to support individuals, and her work alongside the exceptional pastoral care provided by permanent members of staff ensures that the welfare of the children and their families are appropriately supported. The senior leaders have an unflinching commitment to follow the teachings of Christ in supporting and loving one another, particularly those who are experiencing problems. They look for creative and effective solutions to overcoming difficulties. Children with specific needs are welcomed and cared for in a nurturing environment where they feel safe and secure. The rainbows group allows children opportunities to discuss their problems in a non-judgemental atmosphere where they are supported by each other and the trained adults to come to terms with the challenges they face. Gospel values underpin all that happens within the school. Adults appear calm and respectful at all times, they show genuine concern for all within their care and have established excellent relationships with both pupils and other staff members. A member of staff recently involved in the Manchester bombing spoke movingly about the love she felt from other members of staff who have supported her through this difficult time. The school is also outward looking in its support for the welfare of others; there are countless examples of how the children and staff have reached out through fundraising events to support others less fortunate than themselves, e.g. Cornerstones and CAFOD, to name but two charities. The children are also encouraged to initiate new ideas for projects they wish to get involved in. There are a variety of pupil voice opportunities that children are encouraged to be active participants in and express their opinions and views in order to make positive change. These include the GIFT chaplaincy team, mini vinnie's, eco warriors and school councillors. Children speak confidently about their roles and the responsibilities they undertake and have a true sense of the need to serve others. The school ensures that appropriate funding for resources to develop the Catholic life of the school is always a priority when determining how best to use the school budget. It shows a strong commitment to Christian stewardship and service.

### **THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING**

Prayer and acts of collective worship are at the core of all that happens at this school. On the day of the inspection, inspectors witnessed a vibrant and reverent celebration of Mass which all the school attended at the local parish church. Children joined in with the responses and their beautiful singing was a true reflection of how the school worships together. Throughout the day other acts of worship, some initiated by the GIFT chaplaincy team, were further evidence of what an important aspect of school life prayer is. High quality displays and a prayer area in each classroom ensures that children are given every opportunity to respond through prayer in developing their relationship with God. In the early years children gather in small groups to learn familiar, appropriate prayers. The careful and sensitive practitioners are skilled in developing a sense of awe and wonder with the children. The school prayer is known by all and was included in the many religious education lessons observed. Pupils are encouraged to write their own prayers as well as to know a growing number of traditional prayers. The reverence shown by the pupils during prayer and worship times was exceptional to see. At lunchtime, the GIFT chaplaincy team planned and led an act of collective worship which was based upon the theme 'Jesus is the light of the world'. It was an outstanding example of how the children were able to choose appropriate Scripture, music and prayer. It also included reflection and challenge, encouraging all who attended to go out and live The Gospel. The children have been supported in their development by the chaplaincy leader who is employed at the school. The school's commitment to developing its prayer life has included staff training and the purchase of additional resources to further enhance the creativity and spirituality of acts of worship. At the beginning of each staff meeting, staff are encouraged to come together and pray. Children enjoy taking part in other celebrations and gatherings; they are sensitive to what is happening in the world and make up their own prayers for those who are suffering both locally and in other parts of the world. Strong links with the parish are evidenced through the Sacramental programme and regular year group Masses which parents value, and it is a credit to these links that so many children become altar servers and members of the parish orchestra.

### **THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING**

Our Lady of Grace School is an outstanding example of how to bear witness to the gospel values. From their first days at school children are taught to value, respect and forgive each other and this is a theme that follows them through their school life. The children's behaviour is exemplary; they show care and concern for each other and recognise God in themselves and others. The staff have a deep understanding of what it means to be a true witness. Their care, respect and acceptance of each unique person has created this warm and nurturing school. Staff and children are happy and joyful. The quality of relationships is outstanding and it is this that makes the school so special. The children talk confidently about how they have a responsibility to serve others. The school council, elected by their peers, have a budget of £1,000 to use appropriately to buy resources for the school. The eco warriors have been involved in 'switch off fortnight' and 'waste week' campaigns, whilst the establishment of a mini vinnie's group will provide children with opportunities to develop their support of other worthwhile causes. The school already supports a variety of charities such as CAFOD, St Joseph's Penny and the Christmas shoebox appeal, through fundraising, but is also active in supporting its community for example singing at the old people's home at Christmas and delivering gifts. Parents commented on how the school teaches a sense of morality and showing kindness to others. The senior leaders are very humble in expressing all that they do personally to develop the staff and children's service of others by being both Disciples of Christ and leaders in evangelisation for the benefit of God's world. The GIFT chaplaincy team are very proactive in bearing witness to the Gospels. They are articulate, thoughtful and excellent role models for their peers and the other children in the school. They are proud to be members of the team and take on their roles with enthusiasm and a strong sense of purpose in following in Christ's footsteps.

### **AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

- To continue to develop the role of the mini vinnie's
- To further enhance the work of the GIFT chaplaincy team
- As part of the school's desire to gain the Arts Mark Award, to develop child initiated opportunities for artistic responses to religious education teaching and spiritual development

Date 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017

Dear Pupils,

Thank you so much for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school for the bishop a few weeks ago. You made us feel very welcome with your happy smiling faces. Mrs Heard and Mr Sowerby really enjoyed learning about all the great things that you do at Our Lady of Grace. Your mission statement is clearly lived by everyone at your school.

We know from talking to you and watching you that you are very proud of your school and take great care of it and each other. We really enjoyed listening to you talk about your school and the many fundraising events you are involved in. Continue to look after each other and help those in need just like Pope Francis asked us to do.

You will be happy to know that we think you have an outstanding school. You work very hard to be the best you can. We enjoyed being part of your lessons. Your teachers work very hard to give you exciting and challenging lessons and we would like to say thank you to them and all who help them in making your school so special.

Your headteacher, with the support of the other school leaders and governors, has worked hard to make your school a safe and happy place for everybody. You are very lucky to have so many people who work so hard to give you the best education they can.

Your beautiful singing and your participation in the Mass and acts of collective worship show that you enjoy living in Jesus.

We have asked your teachers to continue to develop the role of the mini vinnies. We have also asked them to help the GIFT chaplaincy team to have more opportunities to develop their roles throughout the school. Finally, we have asked them to find opportunities for your own creativity from your RE work to be displayed.

God bless you all,

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Heard  
Mr Sowerby

(Section 48 Inspectors)

## **Summary Report to Parents**

On 29<sup>th</sup> of June the school was inspected in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The full report has been made available to the school and can also be accessed via both the school website and the Education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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