

INSPECTION REPORT

St Alban's RC Primary School, Trinity St, Blackburn, BB1 5BN

Inspection date 13th November 2015

Reporting Inspectors Mr J M Thorpe
 Mrs M Kwiatkowski

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

Type of School	Catholic primary
URN	119706
Age range of pupils	3 to 11yrs
Number on roll	205
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Canon Jude Harrison
Headteacher	Mrs Claire Speakman
Religious Education Subject Leader	Miss Siobhan Costello
Date of previous inspection	October 2010

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

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Alban's is a Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic Primary School in the Diocese of Salford serving the parish of St Alban's in Blackburn. The school is approximately 1 mile from the town centre. The school lies within a socio-economically disadvantaged area. This is an average size school with 205 pupils on roll of whom 61 are baptised Catholics. 46.4% of pupils are eligible for free school meals and Pupil Premium grant; considerably greater than the national average. The age range is from 3 to 11 years, the school admission number is 30. 27.8% of pupils have been identified as having a special educational need or disability. 5 of these pupils have Education, Health Care Plans or Individual Pupil Resource Agreements. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is considerably above the national average at 65.6%, as is the proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language at 50%. There are 11 teachers, 8 are Catholic, 5 of hold the CCRS.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Alban's is a good school with several outstanding features. The school has a strong Catholic ethos and successfully offers its pupils a traditional Catholic education, in which, diversity is welcomed and celebrated. It is a happy school, children enjoy learning and parents are supportive. Pupils are very friendly, polite and well manner. Throughout the day of inspection their behaviour was exceptional. The school places pupils at the very centre of all aspects of school life and it is highly significant that currently no child is withdrawn from RE lessons or acts of collective worship. Lessons observed were good and most groups of pupils were seen to be making good progress, including those with SEND. In some classes accelerated progress was evident, but this is not typical of all classes.

The dedicated leadership team is committed to making improvements and raising standards for the benefit of all pupils. The informed governing body is supportive of the headteacher, her leadership team and the hardworking staff. There is a sense of purpose in the management of the school, which reflects the teachings of Jesus Christ. Class teachers have worked hard to create an ethos where everyone recognises the need to work together. Teachers are well supported by the effective deployment of teaching assistants and administrative staff.

Since the last inspection in 2010 the school has appointed a new headteacher. The school is now benefitting from a period of stability and focused leadership. The leadership team has a tight focus on continuing school improvement.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- Pupils clearly love their school and show a high level of respect for each other.
- The leadership team is enthusiastic to achieve improvements across the school.
- Relationships across the school are of a high quality.
- The governing body is fully supportive of the headteacher and the leadership team.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS GOOD

The quality of leadership of the school is good. The dedicated headteacher, deputy headteacher and RE subject leader are totally committed to providing strong Catholic leadership for the school. Priority has been given to deliver the 'Come and See' scheme and quality acts of collective worship. Non-Catholic teachers attend the Kerygma programme. A GIFT team has been established that has begun to positively affect spirituality within school. The re-written mission statement places emphasis on the relationships between individuals and with God. The teaching of RE is carefully planned, the RE subject leader has produced a detailed action plan that involves regular book scrutinies and the monitoring of teaching and learning. The leadership team and the governing body are well aware of the strengths and areas for development; they have a clear, shared vision for the future development of the school. The governing body fulfils its role well in respect of its Catholic foundation, it has good knowledge of the school through headteacher reports, RE subject leader reports and reports submitted by the RE link governor who visits school regularly. The governing body ensures that the school places the pupils at the heart of their decision making and their vision for the school. Pupils

across the school are eager to develop their leadership roles as chaplains and school councilors. The parish priest is a regular and highly valued visitor to the school who is totally committed to supporting the religious welfare of all pupils. The whole school promotes community cohesion by helping all pupils to appreciate the diversity of people's religious beliefs, backgrounds and circumstances.

RE is resourced in line with other core subjects and receives at least the required 10% of curriculum time.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS GOOD

The mission statement is displayed around the school, work is currently underway to ensure pupils have a deeper understanding of its significance to the daily life of the school and how it is the focus for encouraging everyone to do their very best. The school has developed a clear vision of how RE should be taught. Teachers place a high priority on their teaching of RE. In the best lessons, considerable thought, detail and research was evident in teachers planning. Differentiation was present in delivery and outcome. Speaking and listening was encouraged. Religious literacy was developing well, particularly in key stage 2 classes, where good subject knowledge enabled the teachers to deliver their lessons imaginatively thus maximising and sustaining the interest of pupils. Appropriate vocabulary was modelled by the teachers and they praised pupils that used appropriate vocabulary. It was obvious that pupils are used to working in a variety of ways, collaboratively and individually. They shared tasks and ideas and were happy to volunteer answers to a range of carefully chosen questions. Bible stories and references to scripture were used in most lessons. Pupils grappled with the concepts of vocation, commitment and living out the mission. In an enjoyable collective worship session in key stage 1, all pupils read their own prayers with reverence and respect. All pupils sang enthusiastically! In a minority of lessons, the pace of learning was hindered by the insufficient subject knowledge of the teacher and too much time sat on the carpet. Across the school pupils attitude to learning is good, they show a genuine interest in and enthusiasm for RE. Standards of work in pupils RE books are at least in line with standards in literacy books. Constructive marking features in most books, but this was not consistent across the school. The role of teaching assistants in classes contributes significantly to effective learning in RE lessons.

THE QUALITY OF THE WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

St Alban's provides a very warm and welcoming environment. Pupils and staff foster a strong sense of belonging and clearly understand the importance of welcoming others into their community. Parents, staff, governors and pupils talk positively about the welcome all visitors receive. The parents spoken with said they feel welcome coming into school and that their children are happy. The wide range of workshops, meetings and drop-in sessions on offer have led to an increase in the number of parents and carers who visit school. Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Pupils were polite and well-mannered throughout the day. Pupils of other faiths are welcomed into the school, their faith traditions are respected; it is clear that diversity and difference are valued and celebrated. As a result of the strong Catholic ethos the pupils show respect and consideration for each other and the importance of the dignity of the individual is clearly evident. The school has a holistic approach to ensure the pupils social, emotional and cultural needs are very well catered for. The school has excellent links with the parish. The parish priest has a valued presence around the school. Parents are kept informed about school via the school website and dual language newsletters, translators are present at meetings to support non-English speaking parents.

THE QUALITY OF THE WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

Clear structures and procedures are in place for safeguarding, which ensures pupils are provided with a safe and secure environment. There is an effective induction programme for all who are new to the school. Pupils are able to say why they feel safe in school. Relationships are of a very high quality. The school ethos fosters a culture in which pupils are confident to express their views and share their experiences knowing that others will value and respect them. Pupils are happy to talk about how much they enjoy school. They feel happy to talk about their worries and are confident that adults will listen to them and help them. The welfare of pupils is supported by friendship groups, counselling for pupils and families, parent workshops and Rainbows support. The school funds a Caritas Family Support Worker to meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils and families. The calm support offered by adults ensures learning and relationships are strengthened and enhanced. An adult was observed dealing with a key stage 2 pupil, who was having difficulty staying on task in

class. The pupil was taken to one side, spoken to quietly and with compassion before being successfully returned to the class. The Christ centred ethos is loving and positive, thus fostering understanding, empathy and forgiveness. The school is fully inclusive. Parental concerns are dealt with effectively; should a parent call into school they are seen as soon as possible. The school generously supports local, national and international charities.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORSHIP IS GOOD

Examples of quality prayer and worship are to be found around the school and clearly it is a very important aspect of school life. Worship opportunities for pupils are appropriate to their backgrounds and faith experiences. The opportunities to worship promote a strong community, a sense of service to each other and are pupil centred. An inclusive approach enables pupils to grow in confidence in prayer. In a key stage 1 class pupils reflected on their responsibility to strive always to make the right choices and how knowledge of the life of Jesus Christ can guide them in their tasks. Pupils had composed their own prayers and read them confidently as they sat around a lighted candle. Appropriate vocabulary was used and all pupils engaged with reverence. Pupils were allowed a brief period of quiet reflection and silent, personal prayer. Traditional prayers were recited. Pupils were obviously becoming involved in a prayerful relationship with God. Older pupils used a prayer postcard from Cardinal Newman as the focus for their discussions on vocation and service. Pupils were comfortable with their feelings and displayed a good level of religious literacy. Some of these pupils showed an impressive maturity that suggests they are ready for greater, more demanding challenges. Inspectors agreed that there is good practice in most classrooms and that further improvement could be achieved by giving pupils increased opportunities to compose and present their own prayers and reflections in their classes and in other classes. In every class there is a prayer focus area that provides pupils with opportunities for spontaneous prayer and reflection. There are special celebrations throughout the school year, masses, assemblies and non-eucharistic services that reflect the liturgical calendar and support the sacramental programme and spiritual and moral development of pupils.

THE QUALITY OF THE WITNESS IS GOOD

The many displays on corridors and in classrooms reflect the commitment of staff and pupils to their Catholic faith. They show prayers, celebrate pupil's achievement, whilst following the liturgical year. Adults act as role models of the school's mission and values. Gospel values are explicit around the school, known, understood and witnessed by the pupils and staff. Relationships at St Alban's are very strong and a sense of teamwork is evident. The school community knows its responsibilities in terms of equal opportunities, reconciliation and Christian stewardship. The school is a diverse community that characterises a values based Catholic culture. Pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong, fairness and injustice. The leadership team acknowledged that the GIFT team was in its infancy, but have prepared an action plan to further its impact around the school. The mission statement is in plain English and easily understood. Further discussion is underway to ensure all pupils realise it demonstrates how the school bears witness to a loving God; that it enables pupils and staff to meet God each day and supports the school community as it strives to meet the challenges involved in witnessing. Parents appreciate that school continues to celebrate many of the church traditions and that the pupils are encouraged to learn traditional prayers. At all times the behaviour of pupils was outstanding. Every child was beautifully presented and proud to wear their school uniform.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- Fully embed the recently introduced RE scheme 'Come and See' throughout the school ensuring continuity between classes through rigorous planning, monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.
- Continue activities with pupils to ensure that they understand the relationship between the mission statement and the 5w's model of school self-evaluation.
- To implement a holistic sex and relationship programme, which is set in the context of the Church's teaching.

13th November 2015

Dear Children,

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us and for making our visit to St Alban's such a joyful occasion, we really enjoyed our time with you. Everybody in your school is inspired by the teachings of Jesus Christ and work very hard to always do their best, because of this your school is a good Catholic school.

We really enjoyed seeing your lessons and listening to you telling us about all the wonderful things you do in St Alban's. We saw as many of you as possible and we are sorry if we didn't see some of you. Thank you for sharing your work with us, we enjoyed reading your RE books and we were very impressed with your work displayed in classrooms and on corridors. It was clear to us that you have a good knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.

It was good to see so many happy faces, you are clearly very proud of your school. We felt very comfortable to be with so many polite and well-mannered pupils wanting to succeed, looking out for each other and behaving so outstandingly well all day.

All the adults at St Alban's are very proud of you and what you achieve, well done, keep it up!
Your teachers are keen to work with you to continue to build the Catholic life of your school.

Enjoy the rest of the school year.

Yours Sincerely,
Mr John Thorpe and Mrs Marie Kwiatkowski
(Section 48 Inspectors)

Summary Report to Parents

On 13th November 2015 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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