

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. John the Evangelist is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of St. John the Evangelist in Bromley Cross, Bolton. 55% of the learners live in the parish. The school is situated on the outskirts of Bolton in a residential area with few obvious signs of economic deprivation. Learners come from a range of backgrounds and live in a mixture of owner-occupied, local authority and rented housing. The age range of the learners is 4 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 30 and there are currently 173 learners on roll of whom 151 are baptised Catholics. 7% are eligible for free school meals. 23 learners have been identified as having special educational needs including 3 who have a statutory statement of special educational need. 98% of the learners are of white ethnic origin and there are 2 looked after children. 1 child has English as an additional language. 7 of the 9 teachers (78%) are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. John the Evangelist is a good Catholic school. It is effective in offering its learners a traditional Catholic education in a safe, caring and secure environment. Learners enjoy coming to school and parents are supportive of the aims and ethos of the school. Learners work hard to achieve the expectations of the teachers and are well behaved, friendly and polite. The school is firmly at the heart of the parish it serves. Parents and learners are fully supported on their faith journey by the supportive parish priest who is fully involved in the daily life of the school and the opportunities it provides for prayer and worship. The school is fully involved in, and supportive of, the parish organised Sacramental Programme. The school makes very good provision for the spiritual, moral and social development of the learners. Love of God and respect for all people is fundamental to the aims of the Mission Statement which are lived out in its daily life. The experienced headteacher leads a hardworking and supportive staff.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 48 inspection in 2006 the school has addressed the areas for development and resolved the majority. Governors are now more pro-active in their role but as yet need to be more involved in monitoring the actual provision in the school. The deputy head retired in August 2009 and a new appointment is in the process of being made. A Year 5 teacher was appointed in September 2008 to teach three days a week as a job share and two newly qualified teachers were appointed in September 2009. In the absence of a deputy head a local authority associate support leader is in school for two days each week as a member of the senior leadership team. There have been no major changes to the fabric of the school.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is realistic and honest. The school is fully aware of the areas that need addressing. The governing body, headteacher and staff have the knowledge, experience and resolve to realise their vision for the future development of St. John's. Therefore the capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further.

- Ensure learners in Key Stage 2 have sufficient opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing in Religious Education lessons.
- Continue to implement fully the tracking of learners' progress in Religious Education including whole school moderation of levels.
- Provide further opportunities for learners to develop their awareness of other cultures.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good. The school has a clear and relevant Mission Statement which is reviewed regularly with all members of the school community being involved in its formation. It permeates all aspects of the life of the school and is at the forefront of all policies. It has a “child friendly” format and is on display in every classroom and throughout the school. The headteacher gives leadership to the school and is ably supported by the knowledgeable governing body under the leadership of the recently appointed chair, and his predecessor. The reports from the headteacher and the dedicated Religious Education co-ordinator ensure governors are kept informed of school developments. Links with classes have been established to promote their greater involvement in school. The school fully supports the parish Sacramental Programme which is seen as a successful aspect of parish life. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school making a significant contribution to the collective worship and the Religious Education provision of the school. Only two teachers hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or its equivalent qualification. The governing body is encouraged to support all teachers in acquiring this qualification. There are strong links with the parish and local Catholic High school. The school is working to further develop links with the wider community

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is good with some outstanding features. The school has a policy for prayer and worship updated in July 2009. Throughout the school year learners, parents, staff and parishioners are provided with many opportunities to strengthen their relationship with God through whole school, key stage and class Masses held in school and in church. At these celebrations learners are fully involved with the readings, bidding prayers, offertory procession and music. The school choir supports the Sacramental Programme celebrations. Special services and liturgies are held during Lent, at Christmas and in May to honour Our Lady. Whole school and key stage assemblies are held weekly. The Friday family assembly is very well attended by parents, family and parishioners, as witnessed during the inspection when the “gardeners” in Year 6 presented their individually prepared prayer books to their “seeds” in Reception class. Classes lead these in turn on a rota system. Prayer has a high profile in school. Learners are familiar with the traditional prayers of the church but are happy to share their spontaneous prayers with others. In all key stages learners’ prayers were on display. The prayer journals, recently introduced in Year 6, are having a positive effect on the spiritual development of the learners. Class collective worship is a feature of the provision. The session attended in Year 3 was a genuine spiritual experience for all involved. At all prayer times learners are respectful and reverent. A detailed file is kept of assemblies and Mass themes. All learners are involved in school collective worship and no learner is withdrawn.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall achievement and standards in Religious Education are good. Learners enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with attainment slightly above the national expectations. Their progress is evident. Language skills are developed and basic letter formation is encouraged. In Key Stage 1 good progress is maintained and, by the end of the key stage, learners have a satisfactory factual knowledge of their faith and many are able to retell bible stories in their own words using well constructed, simple sentences. They use good religious vocabulary when discussing their ideas. In Key Stage 2 learners have a good factual knowledge of their faith using appropriate religious vocabulary in their discussions and their recorded work. However in some Key Stage 2 classes learners are not given sufficient opportunities to record extended pieces of writing expressing their knowledge and ideas in Religious Education lessons. The school should address this issue. Learners accept responsibility willingly and are proud of their involvement in school decisions through the school council and Eco club. They are keen to enhance the learning environment for all in the school. They give generous support to local, national and international charities. CAFOD and Fair Trade involvement demonstrate their commitment to care for the less fortunate in society, showing respect for all God’s creation.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspector agrees with the school that the quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons observed during the inspection confirm this judgement. All teachers plan their lessons with a clear focus. Lesson objectives are made clear to the learners at the beginning of the lesson. A range of teaching styles and activities are used to enhance the content of the lesson and the age of the learners. Resources are carefully prepared and used effectively to support the learning process. Technology is used effectively. Teaching assistants are fully involved in the lessons, supporting those learners who need extra help or assessing and recording comments made by the youngest learners. Plenary sessions are used effectively to bring lessons to a satisfactory conclusion. Homework is used with the older learners to extend their learning. Links are made with assembly themes. Assessment strategies are in place reflecting the suggestions in the diocesan model. Tracking of learners' progress is to be computerised in line with other core subjects. A file of exemplar work has been established. Whole school moderation of levels awarded should now be undertaken. All work is well marked by the teachers. Good work and extra effort is praised with constructive suggestions given for how work could be improved. Learners have good attitudes to their learning. They enjoy their work and are enthusiastic being keen to be involved in discussions. They work well in pairs and in larger groups and their behaviour at all times is good.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The Religious Education curriculum is good. All lessons are carefully planned reflecting the Religious Education curriculum provided by the diocese. *The Way, the Truth and the Life* is used as a supplementary resource. The diocesan World Faiths programme is used in Key Stage 2. The time allocated to curriculum Religious Education meets both national and diocesan requirements. The well organised parish Sacramental Programme has a positive impact on the Religious Education curriculum. The input of the parish priest through his in-service training with staff and his classroom visits, together with the quality of the provision for collective worship, all enhance the overall provision. The recently established childrens' liturgy at Sunday Mass will further strengthen the provision. Good use is made of the parish church as a resource through class visits. A recently appointed governor who is head of Religious Education in a Catholic high school is taking a pro-active role in the school. No learner is withdrawn from Religious Education lessons. The Religious Education curriculum plays a significant role in developing the spiritual, moral and social development of the learners. Opportunities for learners to develop their awareness of other cultures through the Religious Educational curriculum should be explored and developed. This could include the inviting of visitors to the school and the organisation of visits outside the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school has evaluated the leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education as good. The inspector judges it to be outstanding. The experienced Religious Education co-ordinator is meticulous in undertaking the monitoring and evaluation of this important subject in a Catholic school. Detailed records are kept of her monitoring of teachers' planning, lesson observations and book examinations which have been undertaken over several years. She leads by example and is fully supported by the headteacher. Each year she produces a written report on progress for the governing body. She has met with the newly appointed designated governor for Religious Education. She has evaluated the current provision and has established clear and realistic priorities for continuing improvement. She works very closely with the parish organiser of the Sacramental Programme. Resources for Religious Education and collective worship have been audited and supplemented as necessary. The school has an excellent range of good quality bibles available for learners use. A tracking system for learners' progress will be implemented shortly. Every class has a focal point for prayer and attractive displays throughout the school clearly reflect its faith life.