

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 John’s RC Primary School, Chepstow Road, Chorlton, Manchester. M21 9SN

Inspection date 2nd May 2018

Reporting Inspectors Peter Eavers, Julie Frazer, Claire Harrison

Type of school	Primary
URN	105546
Age range of pupils	3 – 11
Number on roll	477
Appropriate authority	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	Fr Patrick McMahon
Headteacher	Bronwen O’Donoghue
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Yvonne Joyce
Date of previous inspection	2 nd May 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	1	
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 John's RC Primary School is a larger than average primary school serving the parish of Our Lady and St John in Chorlton-cum-Hardy. There are 477 pupils on roll including 60 children in the nursery. 100% of the teachers and 98% of the children are baptised Catholics. 13% of the children qualify for pupil premium funding and 20 pupils (4%) have been identified as having a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND). 11% of children have English as an additional language. Attainment for children across the school is above the national average. There is a relatively new senior leadership team in place in the school. The headteacher was appointed at the beginning of the current academic year and one of the assistant headteachers left the school in the summer to be replaced by someone new to the role.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- **Bright, articulate and polite children who are very enthusiastic about their school experience**
- **The outstanding and courageous leadership of the headteacher, very well supported by staff and governors, all of whom have an uncompromising focus on continuing school improvement**
- **The wonderfully inclusive culture in the school which ensures that all pupils are cared for, respected and valued**
- **The remarkable range and quality of opportunities and experiences provided for the children which enable the development of the whole child and encourage resilience and a 'can do' attitude**
- **The wonderful family ethos which permeates every aspect of school and parish life**

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS GOOD

St John's RC Primary School is a wonderfully inclusive school which embodies the ideal of a Catholic family of home, school and parish. The children are provided with an expansive and enviable range of experiences within and beyond the school which greatly enrich the curriculum and help the children to develop resilience and live "life to the full" *John 10:10*. The recently appointed headteacher provides outstanding leadership and has very quickly gained an extremely accurate picture of the school. She has a very clear vision of how the school can improve still further and is very well supported by a talented and extremely committed senior leadership team and staff. The dedicated and very skilled governing board provide excellent support and are extremely ambitious for the school. It is clear that the newly revised Mission Statement, together with the six school values, is having a tangible impact on school life and that the person of Jesus Christ is at the centre of all that the school aims to do. Parents are very supportive of the work of the school. They feel welcome and valued and that their voices are listened to. They speak very highly of the support which they and their children receive. Children are happy, enthusiastic and very proud of their school. They feel safe and cared for. The pastoral support provided for the children is outstanding and all pupils, regardless of their difficulties, are given the opportunity to shine as unique children of God. There are excellent links with the parish and the parish priest is a frequent visitor to the school who is highly valued by pupils and staff alike. The school has correctly identified the areas which it can improve still further and, under the skilful leadership of the headteacher, is making rapid and impressive progress in those areas.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The extremely dedicated and highly skilled headteacher has very quickly developed an accurate picture of the school and how it can improve still further. She is passionate about the children in her care and has a clear and ambitious vision for them. She is very well supported in this vision and ambition by a skilled and committed senior leadership team, including the extremely dedicated Religious Education subject leader and a talented and very hard-working staff team. The very dedicated and skilled governing board demonstrates a deep commitment to the school and to the Church's mission in

education. They share the headteacher's passion and ambition for the school and provide high quality support and challenge. Leadership decisions are clearly driven by Gospel values and resources are targeted to support those in greatest need. A very good example of this would be the school's decision to employ a Pastoral Manager whose excellent work in the school is highly valued by parents and pupils alike. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is given a high priority in the school's drive to develop the whole child. The parish priest works tirelessly to support the school and is a valued presence and influence in the spiritual lives of the children, parents and staff. Excellent, supportive relationships permeate the school at every level. Children are given the opportunity to take on a range of leadership roles across the school, including school council, digital leaders, play leaders and eco team, and feel confident that their voices are heard and that they can have an influence on school life. The Health and Wellbeing Council talk confidently about what they do "when the going gets tough" – "dig deep!" The professional and personal development of staff is given high importance and those new to the school are very well supported.

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

St John's fosters a very real culture of welcome for all within and beyond the school community and works extremely hard to ensure that all feel valued and respected. The school is very inclusive and the support provided to those children with particular additional needs is exemplary and ensures that they feel highly valued and empowered to take a full and active role in all aspects of school life. The emphasis on a strong family ethos across the school enables children, parents and staff to feel a very tangible sense of belonging to and ownership of the school. There is a clear emphasis on supporting those children and families experiencing difficulties. Those parents interviewed spoke very highly of the welcome they receive from the school. They felt that staff were extremely approachable, always willing to listen and that they know their children very well. They described how staff were always prepared to "go the extra mile" and "couldn't do enough" for them and their children and that the support from the school had provided a "big lift" for families going through challenging times. They were very enthusiastic about the recently established support group for parents of adopted children and saw this as a very good example of the school's commitment to helping all. The work of the Pastoral Manager was singled out for specific praise, with parents describing her as "amazing" and the "go to person" if they were experiencing particular difficulties. Children are very proud of their school and speak highly of the experiences and opportunities that are provided for them. They feel that incidents of bullying are rare and if they happen, they are dealt with very effectively. They feel safe and loved and behave very well around school. There is clear evidence that the school's revised behaviour for learning policy has had a significant positive impact on pupil behaviour. The school has very effective procedures to keep children safe. The wonderful range of inclusive extra-curricular opportunities provided for the children greatly encourage the development of the whole child. Many of these clubs, such as the lunchtime dance club, are led by the children themselves and they also use their God-given talents to entertain others, such as musicians playing during lunch. Children and parents are actively involved in and very successful at raising money for a wide range of charities, including Cornerstone, St Joseph's Penny, CAFOD, Francis House and Cancer Research. The children are also developing their roles as advocates for change. For example, they recently devised and took part in a very successful campaign to persuade local cafes not to provide single use straws and the school has recently started to develop as a UNICEF Rights Respecting School.

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word) IS GOOD

The new Mission Statement, "Growing and learning together in the footsteps of Jesus", which was drawn up following extensive consultation with children, parents, staff and governors, is known, lived and clearly evident throughout the school. Together with the six school values of Gratitude, Love, Respect, Joy, Kindness and Resilience, it is having a tangible impact on learning and behaviour across the school. Religious Education (RE) is given a high priority in the curriculum and meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory through the use of the *Come and See* and *Caritas in Action* schemes. Pupils enjoy their learning in RE and inspectors saw some wonderful examples of children reflecting deeply on themes related to, amongst others, the Pope's encyclical, *Laudato Si*, the refugee crisis and the events of Pentecost. Teachers use both the indoor and outdoor learning environment creatively and together with innovative use of a range of technology, these enhance and inspire the children's learning. The development of Philosophy for Children and an emphasis on high level developmental questioning is encouraging children to engage with important questions of purpose and meaning and

this is clearly having an impact on the depth of children's thinking and responses. The headteacher and RE subject leader have quite rightly identified the need now to ensure that the children's written work reflects this depth of thinking. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is embedded in the curriculum and is helping the children to develop as responsible, caring and loving members of God's family. They learn about other faiths and talk confidently about the need to respect and value the beliefs of others. Sacred Scripture is given importance across the school and children are developing their ability to make connections between scripture and their everyday lives. The school has forged very good links with other Catholic schools locally to share practice in RE teaching and learning.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS GOOD WITH OUTSTANDING FEATURES

Links with the parish are outstanding and a clear strength of the school community. The work and dedication of the Parish Priest is central to these links and he is a highly valued and regular visitor to the school. The Sacramental Programme is extremely well-supported and children and staff have a wide-ranging involvement in the spiritual life of the parish through class and whole school masses, choir, liturgical readers and serving on the altar. There is a clear sense of devotion to prayer throughout the school and pupil attendance at voluntary times for worship, for example the lunchtime rosary club, is impressive. Children are prayerful, reverent and very respectful in prayer time and it is clear that approaches such as mindfulness and skilful questioning are encouraging children to reflect deeply during class-based worship. Inspectors were privileged to be present at an extremely moving whole school assembly on the theme of the refugee crisis which was led superbly by a group of children and which featured the children's own poignant reflections on the refugees' plight. Staff and children are rightly proud of the newly opened chapel and the school has plans to develop its use even further for different types of worship. The Pupil Chaplaincy Team take their roles very seriously and are becoming more active in leading prayer and worship. They help the headteacher and RE subject leader to prepare liturgies for assemblies and lead the Key Stage 1 assemblies. The school has correctly identified the need to develop the children's ownership and leadership of prayer and worship further across the school. Music is a key feature of worship in the school. Children sing beautifully and with great enthusiasm during assemblies and acts of worship. The school council recently worked with a composer to create their own wonderful Mission Statement song which the children sing with great pride and which beautifully represents the richness and inclusivity of this unique and very special Catholic primary school.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- **Provide further opportunities for children to reflect in their written work the depth of thinking evident in their verbal responses**
- **Fully embed the very good practice which is clearly developing in Religious Education across the school**
- **Develop and embed pupil ownership and leadership of prayer and worship across the school**