

**INSPECTION REPORT**

**St Cuthbert's RC Primary School, Heyscroft Road, Withington, Manchester, M20 4UZ.**

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Inspection date 24<sup>th</sup> February 2016

Reporting Inspector Mark Mountcastle  
 Anne Heard

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

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Type of School Primary  
 URN 3523500  
 Age range of pupils 3-11  
 Number on roll 342  
 Appropriate authority The Governing Body  
 Chair of Governors Rebecca Kennedy  
 Headteacher Dominic Mulcahy  
 Religious Education Subject Leader Janet Mudd  
 Date of previous inspection June 2010

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<b>The Inspection judgements are:</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Explanation of the Grades</b>  1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The quality of the Word	1	
The quality of the 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**

St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Primary School is a larger than average school serving the Parish of St Cuthbert's in Withington. There are currently 342 children on roll, including nursery aged children. The school is an inner city primary school with high levels of deprivation. The number of children eligible for pupil premium is well above the national average; currently 42% of pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding and 23% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The schools population is richly diverse with 13 different minority groups being represented in the school. The number of children with English as an additional language has risen to 18%. A significant number of EAL pupils entering the school since September 2015 have limited English language. There are currently 49 children on the school SEN register with 5 pupils who are in receipt of an Education Health and Care Plan. The governing body is very experienced and has recently been reconstituted. The experienced headteacher has been in place since September, and following a period of instability and high staff turnover, the school is now settled as it looks positively to the future.

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

St Cuthbert's is an outstanding Catholic school with many outstanding features. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher is having a significant impact on the improvement of the school which has moved forward considerably in this last academic year. The leadership is further enhanced by an outstanding deputy headteacher. The senior leadership have driven forward immense and significant change and brought about rapid improvement. The pace of change is considerable and continues to impact on standards. The school is supported extremely well by a skilled and knowledgeable governing body who are providing appropriate and robust challenge. They are courageously reflective and aspirational in striving to 'inspire to be our best.' The children are a real asset to the school and all are very warm in their welcome and their positive attitudes are infectious. The excellent provision in the Early Years provides a very strong start to school and the warm family atmosphere fostered here is replicated throughout the school. Everyone associated with the school: children, staff, governors, parish priest and parents are rightly proud of their school and all it gives to the community. Their vision for the future is inspiring. The whole community are carried forward, wanting and expecting the best, which they are all receiving.

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

- Outstanding and energetic leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, assisted greatly by a very experienced, challenging and supportive governing body.
- The positive and friendly attitude of the children, who give so much to school.
- The quality of the relationships and partnership between, school, parish and home greatly enhances the Catholic life of the school.
- Prayer is at the heart of the school community. Children demonstrate a high level of skill and confidence in planning and leading prayer and worship.

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

The very clear vision and strength of the headteacher and senior leadership team is a key factor in this outstanding catholic school: they lead by example. They are constantly presence in the learning and they provide a clear message; 'inspired to be our best' in everything from work, to behaviour and attitudes. The very experienced headteacher is driven by his passion to provide the very best for the children at St Cuthbert's. They are reaping the benefits not only of his experience, but his enthusiasm, which is infectious. The governors are well informed, very experienced and not averse to tackling key questions, particularly around data and raising standards. As one governor stated, "we have learnt our lesson and we will not be complacent again". They are a constant presence around school and know the school and the challenges ahead very well. Their progress and that of the school since the last Ofsted inspection has been rapid and there is real evidence this will continue. The recently appointed RE subject leader has had a significant

impact on driving forward improvement in RE throughout the school. The introduction of 'Come and See', scrutiny of work, INSET, training and high expectations are showing a positive impact on standards. Her enthusiasm and strong leadership alongside senior leaders in the school has had a significant impact in ensuring quality learning in RE, as she stated: "We are bringing everything back to the catholicity of the school".

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

The phrase 'inspired to be our best' from the recently reviewed mission statement permeates every aspect of school policy and life. It is clearly understood by all and is referred to by children, staff and governors. It even sits proudly on the new school uniform and has clearly had an impact on the attitudes of all involved in the life of the school. Great importance is placed on the religious education and it is clearly at the heart of the curriculum. Quality staff training has taken place to underpin the key principles which in turn are evident everywhere throughout the school. Lessons observed during the inspection were all at least good, with very high expectations. Beatitudes were taught very well in a KS2 class. Pupils in upper KS2 were skilled when discussing the symbolism of phrases from the bible. Pupils show a real interest and enthusiasm in RE lessons. They have an excellent attitude to learning, were happy and confident to share their understanding of their faith. Detailed planning, the effective use of challenging questioning, appropriate opportunities for talk partner, discussion and continual assessment, ensured that the curriculum is engaging and appropriate was evident throughout. In a Key Stage 1 lesson, the story of The Good Samaritan was used very successfully to create a very purposeful learning experience. The pace of the lesson ensured that all children were given appropriate challenge and the opportunity to explore 'the big questions'. Collaboration in creative and practical activities ensured a deeper understanding of the Word of God. The children recalled previous stories from Scripture and related it to the current lesson.

Throughout the school sacred scripture is known and lived; as evidenced through the learning environment and the way members of the community interact.

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

It is very evident that St Cuthbert's is a very welcoming school. The warm welcome inspectors received from everyone throughout the day was lifting. Everyone from the caretaker, teachers, governors and children reinforced the clear message that this is a very happy place where all individuals are welcomed and made to feel part of this community. The children are very polite and many introduced themselves with a warm handshake and a happy hello. One child gave an inspector a 'St Cuthbert's smile' and when asked what this meant replied; "I smile at you and then you smile at someone else, we pass around the smile of St Cuthbert. We talk about that in assembly." The parents are also a strong part of the very positive welcome. The parents that were met during the inspection were very proud of their school and grateful for the happiness that permeates the school. They were very supportive, but also prepared to provide a challenge, which they felt were always listened to and dealt with appropriately. The welcome extends to the church where the children's plan and lead liturgies. Increased attendance at church is having a positive effect on the parish community. The smile of St Cuthbert, although always there, is now much brighter and powerful.

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

It is very clear this is a very friendly, caring place, where every individual, be it child, staff or visitor, feels loved, valued and safe. The recently reviewed mission statement is evident everywhere. Behaviour observed by inspectors was excellent and all the children were very polite and respectful. When sanctions are needed they always relate to the message in assembly, a prayer or the school's mission statement.

There is clear evidence of excellent relationships between staff, parents, carers and children. Parents are extremely happy in the care and respect their families receive at St Cuthbert's. One parent commented, "The school is accessible. They listen and act on concerns. They deal with things good or bad". Another parent stated, "Something inspiring is happening at St Cuthbert's". Whilst another said "There has been a

marked difference in how everything has changed in the last 12 months.” In conversation with children they talked about how adults listened to them and are fair in their treatment of issues. School chaplains, Amigos and the School Council ensure that pupil voice is heard. Appropriate policies and safeguards are in place to ensure St Cuthbert’s is a safe and supportive environment for learning. Regular and appropriate training has taken place for relevant staff, for example, all staff have undertaken level 1 safeguarding training. The children and families are hugely charitable and often look outwards helping those in need locally and further afield. The school raise money throughout the year for various charities including CAFOD, CARITAS, St Joseph’s Penny, Cornerstone and the Wood Street Mission.

St Cuthbert’s teach a full sex and relationship education programme which respects the dignity of the person made in the image and likeness of God. They follow a modified Manchester Healthy Schools scheme, adapted to reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church.

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

Worship is given the highest of priorities at St Cuthbert’s. Provision for prayer, worship and reflection opportunities are at the heart of the school. The headteacher has delivered staff training on prayer and worship. This has resulted in staff being highly motivated and knowledgeable in providing stimulating and creative approaches to prayer and worship. High quality RE displays with many including words from Holy Scripture, adorn all the areas within the school. Each classroom has a good quality well-resourced focal prayer area, with many displaying child initiated work. The headteacher and religious education subject leader have worked closely together in ensuring that prayer and worship are an intrinsic part of school life. Assemblies are held regularly each week. On the day of the inspection the child-led assembly demonstrated the school’s capacity for children to formulate and initiate acts of worship. The Early Years Foundation Stage liturgy observed during the inspection was an excellent example of a child centred approach to prayer; appropriately matched to the children’s needs. During these observed sessions reverence and excellent behaviour were witnessed. Once a week children attend mass at St Cuthbert’s Church, where the parish community welcome them. Family masses on Sundays have been reintroduced and this is having a positive effect on the number of families attending mass each week. The sacramental programme further strengthens the links between home, school and parish. Fr Curley is a regular visitor to the school. The introduction of school chaplaincy team has played a significant part in developing the prayer life of the school. The children are very proud to be part of the chaplaincy team and carry out the role with enthusiasm, acting as role models for other children in the school. The development of the chapel has enhanced the opportunities for the children and staff to talk to God. At St Cuthbert’s children are immersed in a prayerful school, which allows all to know and grow in God’s love.

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

St Cuthbert’s is a very warm, caring and nurturing environment where children are encouraged to be their best. From an early age children are taught to respect and care for themselves and each other. This continues to be developed and enriched as the children progress through the school. The children are encouraged to recognise their uniqueness and are equipped with the skills and knowledge to bear witness to the teachings of Christ. All adults within the school environment are excellent role models. They are sensitive to the needs of all within the community of St Cuthbert’s, in particular, individual targeted support for vulnerable families. When interviewing the Mini Vinnies, it was clear that the children are very committed to supporting others less fortunate than themselves. Fundraising events and donation collections take place throughout the year. The assembly delivered by the children during the inspection focused on a Cafod project ‘Splash’ where children are encouraged to do small sponsored events at home to support Wateraid. Other charities that have been supported by the school include Cornerstone, a school in Kenya and Wood Street Mission. There was clear evidence of how children work to influence the school community in reaching out to serve others. The Caritas in Action programme is used effectively to explore the ‘big questions’ about the meaning and purposes of life. The children are confident, caring, joyful and tolerant; they are able to express themselves clearly, eloquently and they have a strong sense of purpose. The Amigos, School Council, Eco Club and Chaplains are outstanding examples of how the children are able

to give witness to the Gospel teachings. The impact of the mission statement is evident throughout the school. Children are encouraged to love, learn and grow and to joyfully fulfil their dreams.

**AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

- Further increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in RE by providing opportunities for teachers to observe outstanding practice and maintaining high expectations for all.
- To ensure feedback given to the children is productive, consistent and helps them extend their learning.

24<sup>th</sup> February 2016

Dear Pupils

Firstly thank you so much for your very warm welcome. We are still smiling at the joy we saw, sharing our St Cuthbert's smiles with everyone we meet.

We think Mr Mulcahy, the staff and governors are doing a brilliant job in making sure St Cuthbert's is a wonderful school of which you can be proud. When we met many of you said hello or shook our hands. We realised you are all very happy and this is one of the reasons your school is outstanding. We were also very impressed by your behaviour and the kind way in which you treat each other. St Cuthbert's is a very special place where everyone works together so very well.

We were particularly impressed by the quality of prayers you say and how you help plan assemblies and masses.

Keep up the wonderful work and remember to keep sharing your St Cuthbert's smiles.

Yours sincerely

Mr Mountcastle  
Mrs Heard  
(Section 48 Inspectors)

## Summary Report to Parents

On Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2016 St Cuthbert's 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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