

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Patrick's is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school which serves the parish of St. Patrick in Oldham. The school is situated in a deprived urban area of Oldham. The age range of learners is 3 to 11. The indicative admission number is 30 and there are currently 238 pupils on roll. 169 (71%) of pupils are Catholics. The standard of attainment on entry to the school is well below the national average. Pupil mobility is high. Overseas pupils with little or no English are admitted throughout the school year. 39% of pupils have English as an additional language. 23.3% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. 34 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs 3 of whom have a statement of special educational need. 9 of the 9.5 teachers (95%) are Catholics.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Patrick's is a good Catholic primary school with some outstanding features. There is a happy, caring atmosphere which establishes a good climate for work. This judgement reflects the school's own evaluation of its provision for Religious Education. Standards attained in curriculum Religious Education are about average. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in each key stage. Pupils of lower ability are well supported and more able pupils challenged. Teaching is good and the curriculum is well planned. The formal monitoring of teaching and learning needs to be developed further and to include a role for governors. Marking needs to be used to help pupils to improve their work. The opportunities for collective worship are outstanding. There is a strong Catholic ethos in the school and excellent provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The diversity of faiths and cultures in the school is celebrated and community cohesion strongly promoted. The acting headteacher and senior management team lead the school well and have a clear view of the school's strengths and development needs.

Improvement since the last inspection

At the last Section 23 inspection in December 2002 the school was asked to develop the role of the co-ordinator to include monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress and to establish a format for planning which enables staff to evaluate pupils' learning. Much work has been done in these fields and the previous headteacher and Religious Education co-ordinator have drawn up guidance for middle managers to include monitoring and evaluation. These guidelines now need to be fully implemented and developed to raise standards further.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is mostly accurate. The acting headteacher and senior management team have a good understanding of development needs and staff and governors are committed to improvement. There is good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish a system of marking in curriculum Religious Education which enables pupils to raise the standard of their work.
- Raise the standards of Religious Education in the school still further by developing the systems for monitoring and evaluation and including a role for governors.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are good. The Mission statement lies at the heart of the school's aims, policies and expectations. All members of the school community try to make "Christ Our Vision" a reality in their daily work with each other. The governing body fulfils its role well in relation to the school's Catholic foundation. It has good knowledge of the school through headteacher reports, meetings between headteacher and chair of governors, who is also the parish priest, and visits to the school by individual governors. Priority is given to employing Catholic teachers where possible. The acting headteacher and senior management team lead the staff in promoting learners' spiritual and moral development. Effective systems have been established to record and monitor aspects of the Catholic life of the school such as liturgical celebrations. The religious life of the school is well represented in staff training. All staff fully support the opportunities for prayer and worship in the school where there is a strong Catholic ethos. The promotion of community cohesion by leaders at all levels is a great strength in this ethnically diverse school. The parish priest is a leading member of the Oldham Inter Faith Forum. The Sacramental Preparation Programme is planned and run effectively by the parish sister with strong support from the school. Children are given many opportunities to care for those less fortunate than themselves through such initiatives as CAFOD, St. Joseph's Penny and inviting the sick and housebound into school.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship in the school is outstanding. The policy for prayer and worship, devised by staff, outlines the many and varied opportunities provided for children. It emphasises daily class worship which gives pupils a wealth of different prayerful experiences. The two prayer and worship sessions observed during the inspection both dealt with "Our Wonderful World". The children in the Foundation Stage group had only been in school for a week and yet were able to make the Sign of the Cross and to praise God in their own way for the beauties of nature. In an excellent session in Key Stage 1 children reflected on the wonders of nature, listened to a bible reading and sang God's praises. Masses are held each term and assemblies are held twice weekly. The good whole school assembly observed was led by a Lower Key Stage 2 class. The children acted out the story of Josaiah and emphasised in prayer the importance of the bible in our faith. They also included prayers for people of other faiths. The large minority of learners of other faiths are always included in the school's celebrations. Hymn singing, background music and attractive displays further enhance pupils' prayerful experiences. Parents are invited to attend the school assemblies. Parish and school collaborate closely in the Sacramental Preparation programme with support from parents.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education are good. Pupils' attainment on entry to school is below national expectations. Pupils make good progress throughout the school and, by Year 6, are broadly in line with national expectations. Learners with special educational needs are well supported and achieve well. The school monitors progress made. The diocesan guidelines on standards and assessment are being implemented. Better use could be made of the information gathered and guidance on improvement could be given to learners when marking. Pupils are confident in discussion and respond to teachers' questioning with good understanding and knowledge. In their written work they explain the meaning of bible stories and write in a variety of styles with the most able doing so very effectively. Their prayers are used in collective worship. The school provides very well for pupils' spiritual and moral development and the children have a clear understanding of right and wrong. The children's behaviour during the inspection was excellent. They show respect for themselves and others. Any deviations from expected standards of behaviour are dealt with in a spirit of reconciliation. Knowledge of, and respect for, other faiths and cultures is fostered. Children from other faiths and cultures are welcomed and made to feel at home.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The inspector agrees with the school that the quality of provision for Religious Education is good. Teaching is good. The teaching observed during the inspection period ranged from satisfactory to very good. Lessons are well prepared and conducted for the main part at a good pace which maintains pupils' interest and enjoyment. Work is provided which matches children's needs including support for the less able and challenge for the more able. Questioning is effective with good use of open ended questions. Teachers have high expectations and use a variety of methods to capture interest and provide enjoyment. A very good example of this was seen in an Upper Key Stage 2 lesson on Jesus' attitude to prayer as seen in the gospels. The children revised stories of Jesus, wrote their own prayers, shared their views with each other and put themselves in Jesus' place. This was done against a background of music, singing and periods of reflection. Use of interactive whiteboards is developing well as seen in a good Lower Key Stage 2 lesson on psalms. Most teachers ensure that pupils understand the purpose of the lesson and some consolidate learning in plenary sessions. Monitoring and assessment systems are in place but need to be developed further. Most teachers do not take the opportunity to help learners improve their work by giving guidance in their marking. The school is encouraged to establish a system of marking in curriculum Religious Education which enables pupils to raise the standard of their work. Learners in most classes show interest in their work and sustain concentration. They respond well to questioning and listen with respect to others' opinions.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. It meets national and diocesan requirements in respect of the time allocated to curriculum Religious Education. The curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of individual learners by challenging the more able and supporting the less able. Effective planning follows diocesan guidelines. Curriculum provision is enhanced by visits from the parish priest, visits to the church, the cross-curricular links and extra curricular provision such as sport and the choir. The diocesan guidelines for assessment are in place. The diocesan guidelines for the study of other world religions are used in Key Stage 2 and many opportunities are used throughout the school to promote understanding and respect for other faiths and cultures. The diversity of faiths and cultures in the school is celebrated and community cohesion is strongly promoted. The Religious Education curriculum is further enhanced by the range of opportunities for prayer and worship provided. The caring relationships between all members of the school community enrich the Religious Education curriculum. Curriculum provision makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. This is supported by strong links with the parents, parish community and associated high schools. The clean, bright attractive rooms and excellent displays create a good working environment.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school has assessed its leadership and management of Religious Education as good and the findings of the inspection support this judgement. Governors have improved their understanding of what is required but need to develop their role as a critical friend in the monitoring of curriculum Religious Education. The parish priest, who is also chair of governors, is a frequent and welcome visitor to the school. The acting headteacher, who is also the Religious Education co-ordinator, has a clear view of her role and the direction teaching and learning of Religious Education should be taking. The diocesan guidelines for assessment are in place. The systems that have been established for monitoring and evaluation of curriculum Religious Education include scrutiny of teachers' planning, pupils' work and lesson observations. These now need to be developed further, to include a role for governors, and to be used more effectively to raise standards further. The school's self-evaluation is mostly accurate. Appropriate priority is given to Religious Education in the School Improvement Plan and associated budgetary decisions. All teachers who teach Religious Education and most other staff are Catholics. Resources are good and are used effectively. Relationships within the school are excellent and enhance the enthusiasm and enjoyment of learners. The school is committed to providing an effective learning environment, good relationships and equality of learning for all.