

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's RC Primary School is a large Catholic Primary School situated in Failsworth, which is just outside Manchester and close to Oldham, in an area which has mixed private and social housing. The children are mostly White British heritage. 13.5 % of the children are eligible for a free school meal with 19% entitled over the last 6 years. 3.8% of the pupils have English as an additional language. There are strong links with the Church and the Parish. The school indicates that the number of fragmented families have increased and that more children have arrived from social housing around the north Manchester area in recent years affecting the socio-economic nature of the school. The school and grounds are free from vandalism. The NOR 467 is higher than the last inspection and is rising. The school is 2 form entry with 15 classes and a standard admission number of 60. All learners are taught in single age classes. The population is settled with few movements in or out of the school. Currently about 90% of the children are baptised Catholic. The vast majority of staff are Catholic.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School is a good school with important outstanding elements. Its sits within its community as a calm and joyful place of learning blessed with wonderful children and exceptionally positive links with The Immaculate Conception parish church. All staff are keenly committed to providing a welcoming school where children are nurtured, taught well and enjoy learning. Leaders can take pride in their work in leading the school forward with purpose ensuring the school fulfils its mission. The outcome is that the children become impressive thinking people steeped in Gospel values and aptly prepared for the future. Governors are dedicated and passionate about the school in providing a Catholic education within this community. Teaching is good overall and, when planning is thoughtful and the children are challenged to become profoundly engaged in their learning, it is outstanding. The school as a welcoming community is outstanding, as are elements of welfare and witness. For example, both the Well Being and Nurture group demonstrates the commitment of the school to support the needs of all families. This is underpinned by the positive relationships that epitomise St Mary's. Parents are very supportive of the school as was evident with the wonderful 'Easter Gardens' displayed in the school hall during the inspection. Families can be truly proud of their school and enjoy the time ahead as the school moves to outstanding overall provision. As one child said, 'I didn't know God before I came to this school', epitomising the special atmosphere that defines St Mary's School.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL

- The commitment of all staff to providing a caring and nurturing place of learning that impacts very positively on the children's sense of well being and security.
- The outstanding behaviour of the children that undoubtedly plays a significant role in the school being a happy place, giving the children joyful memories of their time at St Mary's.
- The positive links with the parish of the Immaculate Conception and the pivotal role of Fr John, the parish priest, in the school's spiritual life.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS GOOD

The school is currently facing a time of uncertainty in terms of leadership at the moment. The Headteacher is soon to retire after six years of dedicated service to the school. A part time, phased retirement is in place for this academic year. She is held in high regard within the community and has a deep pride in her work in establishing St Mary's as a good Catholic school with so many exceptional features. She is strongly supported by the Deputy Headteacher, who shares the role of Headteacher. Both leaders have cleverly established a positive way of leading the school that has meant that standards are maintained and their mutual strengths have been harnessed. Other leaders are making strides forward in developing their skills and expertise by undertaking a range of relevant courses. The RE coordinator was not present in school during the inspection due to ill health and her role was partially being met by another member of staff who is very new to leading this prominent and crucial area.

Hence the leadership of RE is not outstanding at the current moment as clarity and rigour in its overall direction are emergent as the school meets the demands of this uncertainty. Governors are passionate about the school and many have been involved in serving the school for many years. This dedication is an important strength of the school, as it gives stability and support. Governors should feel confident to increasingly provide challenge to the school's leadership team during the weeks and months ahead as the appointment of a new Headteacher is made. The Parish Priest is exceptionally dedicated to the school and is regarded most highly by all with the community of St Mary's RC Primary School.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD COMMUNITY IS GOOD

Overall the quality of the Word community is good. On occasions, inspectors witnessed outstanding teaching and learning where planning was carefully thought out and children were engaged and challenged. Higher order questioning skills and higher expectations were positive features when teaching was at its best. For example in a Year 5 class where the children were learning about the sacrament of reconciliation, the children produced outstanding work because all of these elements were present. To further enhance the experience, a period of calm reflection at the beginning and end of the lesson allowed the children to stop, think and pray, developing their growing spirituality. In another lesson in Year 6 because of high quality teaching and learning, complimented with high expectations and cross curricular links to literacy, the children produced some excellent reports on the Trial of Jesus. Similarly, in Year 5, pupils were challenged to write newspaper reports about Easter Sunday following a role play activity based on their own play scripts. Effective questioning and continual assessment led to high quality outcomes. It is important for the school that outstanding practice is modeled across the school so that all teaching becomes good or outstanding. In the best lessons there was excellent partner talk that proved that the children were thinking about the 'bigger picture' and planning was detailed so that the lesson was engaging, well pitched and moved along with pace. During the inspection occasionally the teacher spoke for too long before the children embarked on their learning. Similarly when the children were unclear about the focus of learning and how to gain success then progress decreased. The attitude and behaviour of the children in every lesson observed was outstanding. It has considerable effort over time to achieve this and the school should rightly celebrate this exceptional feature.

THE QUALITY OF THE WELCOME COMMUNITY IS OUTSTANDING

A warm and friendly welcome in the true spirit of hospitality built on an acknowledgement of Christ's presence in others is extended to visitors by all the children and staff. There are many thoughtful and informative displays, clearly demonstrating the Catholic life of the school, throughout the school which the children and staff are rightly proud of. This deep-seated welcoming tradition helps the school to reach out and support all in the community, recognizing and respecting diversity at all levels. All members of staff demonstrate a caring nature for the children, parents and each other; thus ensuring a great sense of belonging and an affirming ethos throughout the school, where these supportive relationships thrive. Staff set the example for children to follow; they are indeed role models of the love of Christ, respecting the dignity of all. The children are polite and very well-mannered with a cheerful outlook and smiling faces in this happy, caring and compassionate school. The parish priest is a welcome visitor and the children and staff look forward to his regular visits, as one pupil said "Fr John encourages us to take time out every day to quietly think and be calm". St Mary's school welcomes parents and encourages their contribution to the life of the school; they feel appreciated and involved in all that their children do. Children and staff who are new to the school are quickly made to feel welcome and valued members of the school community. There is a loving family feel that permeates the school and beyond as witnessed at the Key Stage Two Mass in church attended by over 70 parishioners and parents. Children, parents, staff and governors quite rightly have a great sense of pride and belonging in this happy, caring Catholic school.

THE QUALITY OF THE WELFARE COMMUNITY IS OUTSTANDING

Relationships within the school are good and children work well to support each other in their learning. Staff are models of care and respect. For example, in a Nursery lesson, the teacher ensured that all children had

an active part to play and ensured support for vulnerable children and in a Year 2 lesson where the teaching assistant support was well targeted. Behaviour of pupils in and out of school is exemplary. Assertive mentoring is used within school to ensure that each child clearly understands their targets and is maximising their progress. The schools procedures for keeping pupils safe are good. Children report that incidences of bullying are rare and if they occur are dealt with immediately. They speak about their teachers with fondness and love it when some teachers are asked to perform amusing antics in assembly. The children also enjoy raising funds for more vulnerable groups around the world. Links with the Parish are very positive and the influence of the Parish Priest on the lives of the children is a key element. The excellent work of the Well Being and Nurture groups ensures that children's achievements are celebrated and that the most vulnerable are well cared for and listened to. As a result children develop care and respect for each other and God's creation. One pupil commented, 'We love doing the gardening, watching things grow and looking after them' and another, 'We really love the Well Being group. When you are sad there is always someone to talk to and fun things to do to cheer you up'. The School Council ensures that pupil voice is heard at St. Mary's and a Well Being Day offers prayer and worship outreach to the whole school community. This Christ-centred community ensures that each person has 'life to the full'.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORSHIP COMMUNITY IS OUTSTANDING

Worship is undoubtedly a strength of the school, there were wonderful examples of the opportunities for worship throughout the year displayed around school. The importance of prayer and worship was expressed and witnessed through classroom acts of reflection and meditation, Key Stage Two Mass and liturgies. The staff and children are confident in preparing and delivering acts of collective worship in different formats. All the acts of prayer and worship observed were child centered, creative, inclusive, thoughtful and relevant ensuring that children and adults were given the opportunity to pray together as a community. At the key Stage Two Mass in church the children showed reverence and took a thoughtful and meaningful role in the Mass. After Mass the Year 6 children led the school and parish community in reflection and prayer with their powerful and moving performance of the liturgical mime, 'Watch the Lamb' that gave time for everyone to reflect on the events of the Passion and to put themselves in the shoes of those who bore witness to these events. This was then followed by a song beautifully performed by the Year 5 children from 'Resurrection Rock', portraying the feelings of those closest to Jesus at that time. RE lessons were started and finished with a meditation/reflection; these special moments of quiet prayer and reflection were beautifully respected by the children and enhanced their personal relationship with God and one another. Each classroom has an age appropriate and relevant focal point for prayer. Parents visited school to view the wonderful collection of Easter Gardens made at home by every family and were very positive about the range of opportunities the school offers for prayer and worship. The introduction of pupil chaplains will give even greater opportunities for children to take a leading role and make a significant impact on prayer and worship throughout the school.

THE QUALITY OF THE WITNESS COMMUNITY IS OUTSTANDING

St Mary's RC Primary School has significant features that show that the faith life and the school's mission is central to its purpose. The children behave beautifully and are a credit to the school and their families. They are excellent company and they speak warmly about their time at the school and the memories they take with them. Caring and supportive relationships are evident around the school and the children value and respect the efforts that adults make to ensure their day to day experiences are so positive. The mission statement is placed prominently and this is further enriched by the special children's mission statement that is known well and understood by the children. St Mary's parish and school are enriched by the excellent supportive role of the parish priest, forging a partnership that allows the faith journey of each child to be nurtured in home, parish and school. It is because of this that the school is well thought of in its local community. The school provides a venue for Church groups, for e.g. the marriage preparation group. Children speak confidently about how they can stay safe, where to get help if worried about something and how to resolve matters of friendships quickly and effectively. They feel that the teachers really try hard to make learning fun, their pride in attending St Mary's. Locally the school is held in high regard and children who have arrived from other schools feel that everything offered by the school makes them feel wanted, cared for and a part of the St Mary's family.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- To model and coach outstanding teaching and learning so that standards in this area are good or better on all occasions.
- To enhance the provision in RE by ensuring that motivational and constant leadership is always available, especially during unforeseen circumstances, and that all leaders contribute to the future provision in RE.
- To undertake training and development, both in and out of school, so that the school's positive start on understanding the 'A Framework for Review, Self Evaluation and Celebration of our Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Salford' is further deepened

St Mary's RC Primary School, Failsworth. Thursday 10th April 2014

SUMMARY REPORT TO PARENTS

On the 10th April 2014 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 and the Education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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Tuesday, 15 April 2014

To the children of St Mary's RC Primary School, Failsworth.

Dear boys and girls,

We would like to say a huge thank you for the wonderful welcome that you gave us when we visited your school before Easter. Mrs Kiernan, Mr Hennessy and I enjoyed our day with you very much. We think you have lots to be very proud of at St Mary's. The way you welcome people to your school is very impressive and so is the way that everyone looks after one another. This means that your school is known as a great place to learn and a place where everyone feels close to God. We loved the special way that you pray, especially at the beginning and the end of the lesson. This showed how grown up and helpful you are.

You come to a good school that has some fantastic features. You will be pleased to know that your excellent behaviour is one of them! The special link with church is another and we know that you all think the world of Fr John!

We have asked you teachers, who we were very impressed with, to share good ideas and outstanding lessons so that your school can be even better. This will mean a little bit of extra work for the teachers, but it will be enjoyable.

We are sure that Mrs Cunningham will have a lovely summer with you as she retires and that you will all give a special welcome to your new Headteacher in due course.

Thank you again!

Mr Harrison
Section 48 Inspector