

**SALFORD DIOCESE**  
**INSPECTION REPORT**

**ST. GABRIEL'S**  
**ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**Vicarage Road South**  
**Castleton Rochdale OL11 2TN**



Inspection date April 2007

Reporting Inspector Mrs. K.A. Morris

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

Type of School Catholic Primary

URN 105825

Age range of pupils 4 -11

Number on roll 154

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair of Governors Mr. David Alexander

Headteacher Mrs. Andrea C. Ward

Religious Education Co-ordinator Mrs. Andrea C. Ward

Date of previous inspection March 2001

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades  1 = Outstanding  2 = Good  3 = Satisfactory  4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	
Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school	1	
The quality of Collective Worship	2	
Achievement and standards in Religious Education	2	
The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education	2	
The quality of the Religious Education curriculum	1	
Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

St. Gabriel's is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford situated in the Castleton area of Rochdale. It serves the parish of St. Gabriel's, Castleton. The learners come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds living in owner occupied and local authority properties. The age range of pupils is from 4 to 11 and the indicative admission number is 30. There are 154 children on roll of whom 128 are baptised Catholics. 7.3% of the learners are known to be eligible for free school meals and 20 children have been identified as having special education needs. 2 learners have a statutory statement of special educational need. Of the 8 teachers 7 (88%) are Catholics. 4 hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or equivalent.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Gabriel's is a good school with some outstanding features. It has a strong Catholic ethos. Leadership and management ensure a warm caring environment in which all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. The Religious Education curriculum is well planned and further enhanced by the provision for prayer and worship, the quality of relationships and the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are well supported by the good deployment of teaching assistants, administrative staff and site manager. All staff are positive role models for pupils and are dedicated, committed and hardworking. Learners' behaviour is outstanding. They are mannerly, polite and friendly showing good attitudes to their learning. Pupils, including gifted and talented and those children with special educational needs, achieve well as a result of the differentiated Religious Education curriculum which meets the needs of all children. Strong home, school and parish links ensure learners and parents are fully supported on their faith journeys. The school is firmly at the heart of the parish it serves.

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

The school has successfully addressed the key issues arising from the last Section 23 inspection in March 2001. Thorough systems for monitoring, evaluation and feedback of teaching and learning are in place. The school has adopted the diocesan guidelines on the monitoring and levelling of learners' work in Religious Education and the learners themselves are made aware of how they can improve the standard of their work. Communication with parents is excellent. They are supplied with a weekly school bulletin and bi-annual Parent Conference Days.

### **Capacity to improve**

The school's self-evaluation is thorough, objective and realistic. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and she is aware of the school's future development needs. She is strongly supported by the deputy headteacher, the parish priest, the chair of governors, an active and knowledgeable governing body and a hardworking staff. There is a genuine commitment to ensuring that all involved in the school community recognise the important role they play in its future development. The school's capacity to improve is therefore good.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that the school's marking policy is consistently applied.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL**

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The Mission Statement is reviewed annually taking into account the views of all its stakeholders. It is prominently displayed throughout the school and permeates all aspects of school life. The success of the school is due chiefly to the strong leadership of the hardworking headteacher, the dedicated deputy and the wholehearted support of the staff. The school benefits to the full from an active, knowledgeable and supportive governing body which discusses and revises Religious Education policies. The parish priest who is the link governor for Religious Education and the chair of governors both demonstrate an impressive knowledge and understanding of school life. They are very regular and welcome visitors to the school. The parish priest meets with staff and visits learners in their classes. He is well known to them all. During his many visits to the school he is able to monitor the provision thus enabling him to keep other governors informed. In addition detailed reports from the headteacher who is the co-ordinator for Religious Education enable governors to monitor closely the work of the school as a faith community. The governors' curriculum committee evaluates provision for collective worship and liturgy and members of the committee visit classes to observe Religious Education lessons and the attitudes of learners relating to behaviour and work. A shared vision for the ongoing development of the school as a Catholic community is reflected in governor appointments of committed Catholic teachers to the staff and the support they give as link governors. Governors are seen as "critical" friends who hold the school to account for its performance. The school is firmly at the heart of the parish and fully supports the Sacramental Programme.

## **THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

Provision for collective worship is good both in frequency and quality. It is underpinned by a clear Religious Education policy which includes prayer and worship. Throughout the year parents, parishioners, staff and learners are offered a range of meaningful opportunities to develop their relationship with God. Whole school and class Masses are celebrated in school. On occasions in the summer term whole school Masses are celebrated in church. They are planned and led by different classes in order that all pupils are given the opportunity to participate. The support of the parish priest and his involvement with these celebrations are appreciated and acknowledged by staff and parents. Assemblies and services reflecting the liturgical year and as an extension of pupils' curriculum Religious Education are a regular feature of school life. Key stage celebrations and Holy Week and Advent services are planned by the pupils and celebrated with the parish priest, governors, parents and parishioners. Religious celebrations are very well planned, evaluated and recorded by the headteacher. In the collective worship observed during the inspection all learners were fully involved in the celebration which was led by the deputy headteacher with pupil participation in the form of readings, bidding prayers, music and the opportunity for reflective prayer. All the children prayed with respect and reverence demonstrating the developing awareness of the importance of prayer in their lives. Celebration assemblies are undertaken weekly when children are commended for work, manners, behaviour and a variety of achievements. Parents, governors and parishioners are welcome at Masses and assemblies.

## **ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education are good. Learners enter the Foundation Stage with standards broadly in line with national expectations. In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 they make good progress. By the end of Key Stage 1 they are able to relate verbally, and in their written and pictorial work, the biblical stories they have heard. Key Stage 2 learners have good factual knowledge of their religion. Learners are able to use religious vocabulary and know prayers appropriate to their age. All learners understand the difference between right and wrong. They respond positively to Religious Education, enjoy the subject, are well motivated and take pride in their work. Across the whole community there is a feeling of self-worth and self-esteem. This has been further enhanced by the introduction of the "eco" and school councils and "playground pals". Pupils are developing a strong sense of responsibility and are aware of the needs of others and support a number of local and worldwide charities. Very clear and effective strategies and systems introduced since the 2001 inspection have ensured that the religious aspect of the school's life and curriculum has been prioritised in order that high standards be achieved and maintained.

## **THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The inspector agrees that the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education at St. Gabriel's school is good. Teachers have high expectations of themselves and their learners and work hard using a variety of interactive strategies. They demonstrate good subject knowledge, an understanding of Religious Education and make good use of *REvision 2000*. Detailed planning, with clearly stated objectives which are fully explained to the learners, leads to well structured lessons incorporating a good range of activities. There is effective use of resources including information technology. Assessment systems have been developed to evaluate teaching and learning and provide a focus for future planning. Levelling of learners' work using the latest Salford diocesan guidelines has been implemented. The school has a marking policy that provides feedback and direction for improvement. The school should ensure that there is a consistent approach to this policy. Appropriate differentiation is identified and assessment provides for the less able child and the high achiever. Well-informed teaching assistants are very well deployed and enhance learners' progress. Classroom management and organisation are very good. Behaviour is outstanding throughout the school with pupils co-operating when working with others or independently. They show an interest in their work and an eagerness to learn.

## **THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM**

The school has assessed the Religious Education curriculum as good. Inspection evidence gathered judges this to be outstanding. Religion has a high profile in the school and is a key element of school improvement and spending plans. The Salford diocesan guidelines *REvision2000* are followed and supplemented by activities relating to the liturgical year and a range of other resources and experiences. World faiths are taught using the recommended diocesan guidelines. The curriculum is further enhanced through an impressive extra-curricular provision including a residential visit to Winmarleigh Hall Adventure Centre for Key Stage 2 pupils. Pupils in Year 6 and Year 3 also have the experience of an annual "Retreat Day" held at Katherine House, Manchester. Teachers' planning is thorough and, together with pupils' learning, is closely monitored by the co-ordinator for Religious Education through work scrutiny and lesson observation. Religious Education is a frequent topic on staff meeting agendas together with in-service training provided both in-house and externally. The school ensures that its profile remains high and that its religious practices and curriculum are under constant review. Appropriate feedback is given and acted upon by individuals and whole staff to ensure good quality teaching and learning. Curriculum Religious Education and prayer and worship are linked effectively together to ensure that both knowledge and understanding and spiritual development are promoted to the full.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The school has assessed the leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education as good. Inspection evidence gathered judges this to be outstanding. The headteacher who is also the co-ordinator for curriculum Religious Education has excellent knowledge of her subject, a clear vision for her role within the school and provides strong leadership and direction. She is well placed to advise and support her motivated staff and knowledgeable governors. She leads by example and is a very good role model for all staff. She leads staff through regular meetings and continues her own professional development by attending diocesan courses and involving diocesan teacher advisers. Her meticulous record keeping includes the use of monitoring and evaluation to determine and identify priorities for future development. The regular and rigorous monitoring procedures introduced since the last inspection have been further developed to include pupil assessment and levelling using the latest recommended diocesan guidelines. She is fully supported by the parish priest who is the designated governor for Religious Education and governors who are kept fully informed of developments in Religious Education and prayer and worship by written and verbal reports from the headteacher and by their visits to school as link governors. Resources for Religious Education and collective worship are good. Attractive displays throughout the premises reflect the faith life of St. Gabriel's where Religious Education and prayer and worship have a high profile. The headteacher's position as co-ordinator for Religious Education helps to ensure that Religious Education is held first and foremost in the life of the school.

