

INSPECTION REPORT

St. Veronica's RC Primary School
Raven Avenue, Helmshore, BB4 4EZ

Inspection date 18th March 2014
 Reporting Inspectors Mrs Jackie McNally
 Mrs Diane Bohan

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

Type of School Catholic Primary
 URN 119589
 Age range of pupils 4-11 years
 Number on roll 171
 Appropriate authority The Governing Body
 Chair of Governors Miss H A Lord
 Headteacher Mrs P C Macro
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Mrs M Brennan
 Date of previous inspection December 2007

| The Inspection judgements are: | Grade | Explanation of the Grades 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 of God community | 1 | |
| The quality of the Welcome community | 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. Veronica's RC Primary School is a smaller than average primary school which serves the parish of St. Veronica's, Helmshore. There are 171 pupils on roll, the majority of whom are white British. The most significant faith group is Roman Catholic. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals is below the national average but the percentage of children supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is around average.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Veronica's is an outstanding Catholic school where the uniqueness of every child is valued and nurtured. The Headteacher provides inspirational leadership and together with a dedicated and committed staff and an effective team of Governors she leads the school with a clear vision. A calm, positive, welcoming atmosphere permeates every aspect of the school and this creates a secure and happy learning environment in which all members of the community feel welcomed. Children's behaviour is exemplary and at all times during the inspection the children were a credit to the school and their parents. The teaching of Religious Education is outstanding and the children demonstrate an excellent religious knowledge and faith commitment. Children are encouraged to think of those less fortunate than themselves and they are keen to organise and participate in fund raising activities. The Governors, staff, parents and children all see themselves as belonging to a family and this is a strength of the school. The children themselves said that they loved their school because: 'We are a small family and we know each other well'.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- **The mission statement is a living statement which underpins the whole ethos of the school.**
- **The ethos, relationships, behaviour and care for all within the school is outstanding.**
- **The leadership and vision of the school at all levels is outstanding.**
- **The school bears witness to the Catholic faith and the spiritual development of the children is outstanding.**

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The quality of Catholic Leadership at all levels is outstanding. Governors of the school are well informed about the Catholic life of the school through the Headteacher's reports and they contribute to the self-evaluation of Religious Education. The school is aware of its strengths and its next steps through rigorous monitoring and evaluation and the leadership team constantly strive to improve the already outstanding provision. The leadership of the school clearly recognises that Christ is central to all aspects of school life and all staff are committed to creating a loving and nurturing learning environment for the children; this is a strength of the school. The school successfully fulfils its mission to develop the potential of each individual by valuing their uniqueness and celebrating their talents. The mission of the Catholic Church in school is a priority and is clearly evident. The mission statement is clearly understood by all children and underpins the work of the school. Similarly, the 5 W's are displayed around the school and they are regularly revisited so that children have a good understanding of what they mean. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their leadership skills by undertaking the role of buddies, school council members and school chaplains. Pupils were found to be confident and enthusiastic about taking on responsibilities and they are excellent ambassadors for their school. Parents feel that the staff and Headteacher care about the children a great deal, and they value their hard work and dedication.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS OUTSTANDING

Staff are enthusiastic and committed to teaching Religious Education and their excellent subject knowledge is clearly disseminated to the children. Lessons are based on the scheme, 'The Way, The Truth and The Life', and teachers are using the guidance from the medium term and weekly plans from the scheme and adapting the lessons appropriately for the topic being taught. The lessons observed show the children have a good knowledge of Religious Education, as well as knowing what it means to follow Jesus. During the inspection there was evidence of good questioning skills by teachers, particularly in Key Stage 2, which challenged pupils to think more deeply. Pupils are keen to learn and demonstrated excellent subject knowledge and it is clear that the teaching of Religious Education is given a high prominence in the school. The children demonstrated excellent independent strategies and by the time they reach Key Stage 2 they are able to approach Religious Education activities with confidence and enthusiasm. In the majority of classes the children produced work of a good quality, shared their views and listened to each other with respect and interest. Children have a good awareness of cultural differences and other world faith traditions and they showed a genuine interest in exploring the similarities and differences between their different faiths.

Various samples of children's work from across the school were looked at during the inspection. Work set was at an appropriate level of pupil development and standards were broadly similar to those of literacy. All books were marked but in order to further develop marking, children need to be provided with comments which provide them with next steps in their learning and allow them time to respond to questions posed as part of the marking. Behaviour for learning in lessons is outstanding throughout the school. Pupils demonstrated their enthusiasm for developing their knowledge in the lessons observed and they could confidently communicate their ideas and knowledge.

The Headteacher, staff, Governing Body and Parish Priest have worked together to enable the school to develop a vision about how Religious Education should be taught in the school. Standards in Religious Education are monitored carefully and the senior leadership team observe lessons and provide constructive feedback to the staff in order to continually improve standards. Links between home and school are strong and the parents, Governors and children are proud to be part of St. Veronica's family.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

The quality of welcome is a great strength of the school; the warm, welcoming and inclusive environment is evident from the minute you step through the door. This aspect of the school's distinctive ethos is maintained by the faith commitment and genuine support from all staff, children, governors and members of the clergy, underpinned by the shared knowledge and understanding of Christian beliefs and gospel values. Those parents interviewed spoke with deep regard about the welcome they receive in school; new members of the school community are quickly made to feel welcome and valued. The school welcomes members of other faith backgrounds with love and respect, sharing the love of Christ readily with everyone. They communicate their values confidently and show a very real desire to involve everyone in the life of the school.

Respect for the dignity of each person is clearly evident across the whole school. The caring ethos and the development of pupils' personal qualities are of paramount importance to the staff and Governors. The whole community's commitment to supporting a sick pupil exemplifies this and discussions with pupils show that the school is certainly successful in developing personal qualities of a high calibre.

The school finds ways of engaging all members of the community. Staff, children, parents and Governors identify strongly with the school and as one parent stated: 'They hold your hand on our journey together.'

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

Staff and children demonstrate a very high level of care and respect for others. The school places a high priority on supporting vulnerable pupils and parents spoke very highly of the quality of the support they receive from the whole school staff, but especially Mrs Macro. There is a genuine concern from all staff for the welfare of all pupils and every individual is valued and nurtured. The school is a registered Rainbows Site and this programme allows the school to provide emotional support for children and their families. Parents and governors provided positive feedback about the impact this had on the whole family.

The school has an effective induction programme for new pupils and this helps them to feel welcomed into the school community. Year 6 undertake the role of buddies for the Reception children and they spoke enthusiastically about how they wrote to new pupils, prepared a welcome assembly for them and then supported them during their first year in school. Throughout the inspection the children's behaviour was exemplary and they demonstrated care and respect for each other. The children act as excellent role models and this is demonstrated by the buddies, play leaders and chaplains. Pupils spoke about how much they enjoyed being at school and they described their school as, "amazing, welcoming and fun". The Christ-centred ethos of the school fosters a culture where children feel confident enough to express their views and share their experiences, knowing that others in the class will value and respect them.

The school's involvement in charity work is a strength of the school and the children talked enthusiastically about their fund raising activities. Recently they have supported Manchester Children's Hospital, Caritas, the Poppy Appeal, CAFOD, as well as many other local charities. The school also sponsors a child in Africa, whom they regard as one of their 'family'. The children are aware that they have a responsibility as stewards of God's creation and the school is currently working towards Eco-School Status.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The school Mission Statement is a living statement and is a constant reminder to all of how Jesus wants us to live. The children's response to it has a significant impact upon their treatment of one another, their whole approach to school life and the overall ethos of our school. The Mission Statement has been written as a prayer and even the youngest children know and understand the Mission Statement. Prayer and worship form an integral part of school life and all members of the school community gather together to celebrate collective worship during assemblies and school masses. In each classroom there is a focal point for worship and during the day there are a range of prayer opportunities for children. The religious displays throughout the school are outstanding and as children move through the school these displays help them to reflect upon their faith. The collective worship and school assembly observed were excellent examples of the quality of worship within the school.

The school has recently appointed school chaplains and these children are excellent ambassadors for the school. They undertake their role with commitment and enthusiasm and they are proud to have the responsibility for leading the spiritual development of others in the school. The chaplains created a calm and reflective atmosphere in the prayer service and their contribution to the spiritual life of the school is outstanding.

Families are actively encouraged to share in worship and are welcomed to share in the masses and assemblies. The school has a 'Journey through Lent' programme which encourages children to engage in prayer and worship activities at home with their family. Each class has a holding cross which is sent home and families are invited to worship together and then share their experiences in a special book. During Lent the children are invited to reflect on an aspect of their faith each week and they record their journey of faith in their individual Lent books.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

Staff and pupils are confident and secure in their witness to Christ, the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. The school encourages and supports its pupils to be proactive citizens who contribute to the decision-making process; this was especially evident in discussion with the School Council members who were committed to ensuring their school was inclusive of all. The school works alongside other Catholic schools in the area to organise whole school INSET, has recently supported a member of staff to complete the Kerygma course and is embedding the work of its enthusiastic young chaplains, who are having an impact on the life of the school.

The impact of the Mission Statement was clearly evident and tangible across the whole school community; it is truly at the core of everything St. Veronica's does. Pupils can discuss its meaning with understanding and use it as a blueprint for how to behave towards each other. The Governing Body is very effective in undertaking its role of leading the school and developing it as a Catholic community. They are passionate about the school and are committed to the high expectations of all and supporting the school's work.

An explicit Catholic culture permeates the whole school and is clearly identifiable through relationships, decision-making and actions. Staff and children demonstrate and witness to justice, compassion, reconciliation, love and forgiveness in their relationships and are able to see the relationship between their own behaviour and Christian values; this was reiterated many times by pupils, staff, parents and Governors. As one parent said of her child ' This school has given him a chance to be him!'

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- **Further develop marking so that children are provided with opportunities to reflect upon their next steps in learning.**
- **To sharpen the focus of learning objectives which are shared with the children.**

St. Veronica's RC Primary School,
Raven Avenue,
Helmshore,
Rossendale,
BB4 4EZ

Dear Children,

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school. We really enjoyed spending the day with you and I am pleased to be able to tell you that you have an outstanding school.

Your behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent and it is obvious that you all respect and care for each other. The school chaplains, play leaders and the members of the school council are excellent ambassadors for your school and we enjoyed listening to all the wonderful ways in which they help to support the Catholic ethos of the school.

We really enjoyed watching your lessons because your teachers planned such interesting activities for you. You have excellent teachers and teaching assistants who are helping you to achieve the highest standards in everything you do. We were really impressed by your religious knowledge and we hope that you continue to develop this knowledge as you move through the school.

We particularly enjoyed sharing in your collective worship and watching your assembly. Throughout our visit you showed us that your school mission statement is very important to you because it shows you how to live your lives.

We really enjoyed visiting your school and we were pleased that we could be part of your school family for the day. You should be very proud of yourselves and your school.

God bless.

Mrs McNally

SUMMARY REPORT TO PARENTS

On Tuesday 18th March 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 website and the Education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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