

SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT

ST. MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Tong Lane Bacup Lancashire OL13 9LJ



Inspection date February 2008

Reporting Inspector Mrs. Pamela Parden

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

Type of School	Catholic Primary
URN	119662
Age range of pupils	3-11
Number on roll	155
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Rev. Fr. Michael Twomey
Associate Headteacher	Mrs. Barbara Dewar
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Mr. David Morrisroe
Date of previous inspection	November 2003

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

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St.Mary's is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school. It serves the parish of St Mary in Bacup which is over half a mile away from the town-centre. The school is situated on the outskirts of the town in the Irwell Ward of Rossendale and admits 10 per cent of learners from the adjacent Greensclough Ward. There is considerable social and economic disadvantage in the area. Housing is mostly rented. Learners' ages range from 3 to 11. The admission number is 30 and there are 155 on roll including 32 pre-school learners who attend on a part-time basis. 77 (50%) are Catholics. There is a significant movement of learners to and from the school. Attainment on entry at Foundation Stage is below national expectations. 33.3 per cent are eligible for free school meals. Currently 48 learners are identified as having special educational needs (50% or more in some classes). 7 have a statement of special educational need. 5 of the 8.1 teachers in the school are Catholics. 3 hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies and 1 teacher is currently studying for this. There is a part-time teaching assistant plus a support assistant in each class.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a satisfactory Catholic school with a number of good features. Following the retirement of the headteacher at Christmas an associate head teacher has been appointed to work with the management for 3 days a week to ensure continuity. She has quickly identified areas of need and, working with the deputy head, governors, school adviser and the Monitoring Intervention Team, she is taking appropriate action. The school provides a welcoming, caring environment where all know that they are respected, cared for and safe. It aims, through fulfilment of its mission, to provide a Catholic education whilst embracing pupils and staff of other faiths. The governors support this. The teachers are dedicated, committed and hard working and actively promote a caring community based on respect and Christian values. By their own example and through prayer and worship and the Religious Education curriculum they aim to promote the spiritual, moral, social, cultural and academic development of each individual. They are keen, co-operative and anxious to adopt new developments to ensure that all aspects of the Religious Education curriculum provide for learners' needs. The support provided by assistants in all classes, working with groups and individuals, is providing extra help for learners with special needs. Teachers are willing to undertake responsibilities and to develop professionally.

Improvement since the last inspection

Since the last inspection in November 2003 the school has taken measures to ensure that the required time is allocated to curriculum Religious Education throughout the school. The planning and delivery of curriculum Religious Education still needs further development. An agreed planning format that includes learning objectives and outcomes, appropriate differentiated tasks, evaluation and assessment would ensure provision for all abilities and aid the monitoring and evaluation process. The school has begun to introduce assessment and recording procedures to track individual learner's levels of attainment.

Capacity to improve

The associate head teacher has very quickly assessed the school's needs and development and gained the understanding and support of the deputy head, senior management staff and governors in addressing immediate issues. Behaviour policy is an agreed priority. The deputy head has drawn up a development plan for Religious Education which is due to be shared at all levels. The need to address the diverse nature and abilities of the pupil intake is recognised. The assessment and recording procedures, led by the deputy head and following diocesan guidelines, will inform future judgments on standards of attainment and learning and teachers are working well to introduce it in the school. This is a time of transition. Teachers are keen, enthusiastic and anxious to move forward. The capacity to improve is therefore good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Review the Mission Statement so that it is owned by current governors, staff, parents and learners.
- Agree common expectations for the quality and quantity of learners' written work to enable secure judgments to be made.
- Establish a system for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in Religious Education.
- Draw up a behaviour policy which sets required standards and parameters and is understood and followed by all learners and staff.
- Audit and update resources for Religious Education.

THE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are satisfactory with some good features. The temporary associate headteacher is showing outstanding leadership. She has quickly identified strengths and areas of need and is working well with the deputy head. She has led a general tidy up and reorganization of materials and resources throughout the school. She has assessed teaching and learning and has begun to encourage staff to work more closely together, sharing in discussions, auditing policy reviews and developing their own roles and responsibilities. The Mission Statement needs to be reviewed and owned by current governors, staff, parents and learners. The Catholic faith is at the centre of the school's life and ethos, and reflects its mission to "live according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ through word and example". Governors work well in their committees. They are willing and supportive but could be more questioning and challenging in their roles. Appointing Catholic teachers is a priority. The parish priest is the chair of governors and link Religious Education governor. He visits the school very often, discusses issues with the headteacher, celebrates Masses and shares the school's life. Thus he facilitates the governors' monitoring of Religious Education aiming to ensure that the distinctive nature of the Catholic life of the school is maintained. Staff work hard, are keen and are committed to the school's Catholicity and values. Community cohesion is promoted and all aim to provide for the spiritual, moral and cultural development of each individual to raise standards, improve learning outcomes and promote good behaviour. Learners have responsibilities as school council members or buddies. The Sacramental Programme preparation is for five learners this year. Most of the preparation takes place in school. Home, school, parish links are encouraged. There are good links with local cluster schools.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The quality of collective worship is good. The policy is ready for review. The school provides a variety of opportunities and experiences which take account of learners' personal, social and religious development. Each Monday and Friday the head teacher and deputy head lead a whole school assembly which is usually linked to the liturgy or a topical event and sets a theme for the week. The assembly observed during inspection was well planned. Learners participated through the presentation of the each child's Lenten promise, reflection, formal prayer and lively hymn singing. Friday's assembly also includes a celebration of achievements and awards. Weekly class led assemblies are planned on a rota. They include learners' participation, curriculum links and opportunities for reflection, prayers, drama and hymns. Classes pray at set times during the day and have a short, meaningful prayer service on three days each week. Prayer focal points in each classroom mostly relate to the curriculum or liturgy. The parish priest plays an active role in the school's prayer and worship. He celebrates Mass weekly for the whole school or classes in turn. The example set by staff encourages respect and reverence in the pupils and helps to create meaningful, spiritual experiences for them. Realisation of the importance of prayer was observed in Year 3. Learners responded with sincerity and devotion and individuals shared their intentions with the group. Governors and parents are invited to attend the assemblies presented by the children, special liturgical celebrations and Masses.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are satisfactory overall. The creative, well-organised environment in the nursery and reception classes provides a happy, challenging start to school life and learning. In Key Stage 1 most learners are achieving well and meeting the required targets by the end of the key stage. Diversity of commitment and ability amongst a large percentage of the learners at Key Stage 2 creates a greater need to address the provision of tasks for all abilities. The standard of learners' written work throughout school is variable. In some cases there is much copied work. Teachers need to agree common expectations for the quality and quantity of learners' written work to enable secure judgments to be made. A system for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in Religious Education is required. Most learners know and understand the Catholic beliefs, values and way of life. They are encouraged to relate this to their own lives and to follow Jesus' example. They know about, and respect, other faiths and cultures. There is obvious knowledge of Bible stories. Learners' enjoy their Religious Education lessons especially when challenging and motivating tasks are set. They were observed to respond confidently, explore ideas and make decisions on kinds of prayer in Year 2. Good spiritual, moral and cultural development results from example set by the staff and their teaching. Good behaviour was observed in lessons and this is recognised and rewarded. However required standards and parameters need to be understood and followed by all children and staff especially at lunchtime. Through prayer, good works and fund raising learners show care for others in need in school, in the local community and beyond.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning is mostly satisfactory but good in some areas especially at Foundation and Key Stage 1. *REvision 2000* is used throughout the school and most teachers have a secure knowledge of it. It has been adapted for classes with mixed age groups. Agreed structured planning needs to be introduced. Formal monitoring arrangements can then evaluate the teaching and learning, and provide help and support when the need is identified. This particularly applies where tasks need to be set to challenge all abilities and where the guidelines need to be followed more closely. However, observation and evidence show that most teachers set well prepared, appropriate tasks to challenge and motivate learners. Very good use is made of teaching assistants working with groups to achieve the best possible outcomes. In most cases teachers' marking needs to be more constructive. Recently introduced assessment procedures are progressing well. Teachers are to share moderation of pupil assessment work, to agree on target setting and inform them of levels of attainment reached by each child. This is particularly important in classes with wide ability levels. All staff recognise that the records can be used to ensure future progression and continuity for each individual. The school is encouraged to continue in this work. Parents are encouraged to be involved with their children's education. They receive letters twice each half term and have a school website with projects, activities and curricular topics.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The quality Religious Education is mostly satisfactory but good work is developing. There is a written policy but, with changes of staff and the nature of the intake of learners, this needs to be discussed and reviewed. Time allocated for curriculum Religious Education meets national and diocesan requirements. The teachers mostly follow the *REvision 2000* guidelines and supplement this with the use of books, artefacts and audio-visual aids. The need to update resources is recognised and is to be addressed. A standard planning format needs to be agreed and introduced so that secure judgments can be made following monitoring and evaluation. The recognition of learners' individual needs, with special attention to social, moral and spiritual development, has led to the introduction of assessment and recording following diocesan guidelines. This is leading to the shared moderating of learners' assessment activities in order to agree levels of attainment and targets to be set. This will ensure appropriate tasks can be planned and set for learners' mixed ages and abilities in each class. The valuable input by teaching assistants will be an important resource in this, providing for the best possible outcomes. Prayer, worship and liturgy are clearly related to all work in curriculum Religious Education together with other appropriate curriculum links to enrich provision. The school has a Statement of Values that includes "Ourselves, Our Relationships, Our Society and Our Environment". Teachers incorporate into their teaching their own personal faith and experiences to enhance learning. Work on other faiths and cultures is undertaken throughout the school including visits forged with outside groups. A variety of extra-curricular opportunities is offered to pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are satisfactory. The associate headteacher has very quickly assessed the school's needs and determined areas for focus. She has begun to draw the staff together giving them more involvement with shared decision-making and responsibilities. The Religious Education co-ordinator has written a draft development plan which is to be discussed further and shared by all staff and governors. He has collated materials for the Religious Education inspection and completed the self-evaluation Form 48. This has facilitated his own personal development in having a clear understanding of curriculum Religious Education and prayer and worship throughout the school. The key issues from the last inspection have been partly addressed. The planning and delivery of the Religious Education curriculum still needs further development with an agreed format which will aid monitoring and evaluation. The achievement of learning objectives, appropriately differentiated tasks and teacher activities to provide for mixed abilities will result. The school has begun to introduce assessment and recording to track individual levels of attainment using diocesan guidelines. Close scrutiny of teachers' planning, learners' written work and lesson observations, with outcomes discussed and recorded, are needed to help the school to move forward. The school is committed to the importance of Religious Education and prayer and worship as central to its whole Catholicity. The governors support this and are well informed by the parish priest. He is a great friend and regular visitor to the school, actively instrumental in helping and encouraging the school and its religious life.