

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION  
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL  
AND  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

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**School:** The Willows Catholic Primary School

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**School URN:** 119626

**Headteacher:** Mrs Amanda Gregory

**Chair of Governors:** Mrs Gerrie Byrne

**Section 48 Inspector:** Mrs Angela Pye

**Date of Inspection:** 16<sup>th</sup> June 2011

The inspection report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Michael Campbell O.S.A., the Bishop of Lancaster (c.f. Code Canon Law, 804, 806), and for the Governing Body of the school (Education Act 2005, Section 48). The inspection reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school's witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

The inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Pupils attending The Willows Catholic Primary School come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The school scores 'B' on the index of multiple deprivation putting it in the top 40% of schools nationally. The school is a smaller than average sized primary school. The majority of pupils (85%) are from Christian backgrounds, 58% being Catholic. 86% of the teaching staff is Catholic. 18% of pupils are in receipt of free school meals which is in line with national averages. 13% of pupils are on the school's register for children with Special Educational Needs which is below national averages. The school serves a number of parishes but most pupils are from Saint John the Evangelist or Saint Joseph's, Wesham. The school has recently been through challenging times; during this inspection the school was led by an associate head teacher. Due to a variety of reasons the number of pupils on roll has fluctuated but now appears to have stabilised. On leaving The Willows Catholic Primary School the majority of pupils transfer to St Bede's Catholic High School in Lytham.

## **FACTUAL INFORMATION**

### **Pupil Catchment:**

Number of pupils on roll:	142
Planned Admission Number of Pupils:	28
Percentage of pupils baptised Catholics	58%
Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations:	27%
Percentage of pupils from other faith backgrounds:	0.7%
Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation:	15%
Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups:	1%
Percentage of pupils with special needs:	14%

### **Staffing**

Full-time teachers:	7
Part-time teachers:	1
Percentage of Catholic teachers:	86%
Percentage of teachers with CCRS:	63%

### **Percentage of learning time given to RE:**

R	10%	Yr 4	10%
Yr 1	10%	Yr 5	10%
Yr 2	10%	Yr 6	10%
Yr 3	10%		

### **Parish served by the school:**

1. Saint John the Evangelist

**Overall Effectiveness**

**1**

**Capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## **MAIN FINDINGS**

The Willows is an outstanding Catholic school where the mission and ethos of Catholic education underpins all that the school does. There is a strong sense of community in the school which pupils subscribe to; one upper Key Stage 2 pupil describing the school as 'a family'. Pupils embrace the school's Catholic mission and derive great benefit from it. Pupils make excellent progress in curriculum Religious Education (RE) and are enthusiastic students. The commitment of the school's governors and senior managers is a powerful force. On-going professional development provided by the enthusiastic and knowledgeable RE Subject Leader focuses teaching and learning and is a vital ingredient in recent improvements. Excellent partnerships with other organisations prevent this predominantly white, largely Catholic school becoming insular. The RE curriculum is well structured around the needs of all learners with enrichment activities being well used to further develop and energise learning. A good range of Collective Worship opportunities is offered to engage pupils of different ages and abilities in praise and thanksgiving.

### **Capacity for sustained improvement**

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is excellent. The school has addressed both improvement prompts from its last inspection with good success. Leaders and managers, including governors, have a clear vision for the school and work tirelessly to promote it. The whole staff is united in its commitment to the pupils and the community. The pupils work well together. They are sensitive to the needs of others and are justifiably proud of their school community. A strong work ethic and a community with Christ at its core make The Willows a dynamic place of learning.

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

- 1) Develop rigorous tracking systems to monitor pupil progress in RE across the school each term alongside other core curriculum subjects. Leaders and managers recognise a need to monitor the progress of RE each term against other core subjects in order to consistently set challenging targets for all pupils.
- 2) Successfully implement 'This Is My Body' and engage parents fully in the programme. 2011 is the first year of the programme at The Willows and the school aims to engage pupils and parents from the

outset, with effective evaluation and planning for improvement in 2012.

- 3) To further develop pupils' spirituality and ability to be reflective by providing:
- regular opportunities (at least weekly) for children to prepare and deliver Collective Worship to their classes.
  - pupil led worship that includes opportunities for peer participation and reflection time.

## **PUPILS**

**How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups**

<b>1</b>
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Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their Religious Education lessons, show high levels of interest and enjoyment in learning and demonstrate very positive attitudes. Their knowledge, skills and understanding are developing well according to their age and capability. Their achievement is excellent. From a low baseline (as evidenced through assessment on entry to school) pupils make excellent progress and leave Foundation Stage with attainment in line with, or exceeding national expectations. Progress is good throughout Key Stage 1 and currently all pupils in the Year 2 cohort are attaining at least nationally expected levels. Excellent progress continues in Key Stage 2. A large majority of pupils attain the nationally expected Level 4 with a good number of pupils (34%) attaining at the more challenging Level 5. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because their needs are accurately identified and teaching and learning styles are well adapted to ensure that they progress.

Pupils' make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic life of the school and gain much from it. They take full advantage of the many opportunities offered and clearly articulate how living out their mission statement makes them better people. They are considerate of others and respond actively to the needs of people beyond the school. Pupils are reflective and enquiring and understand that religious belief and spiritual values are important to many people. They are able to express their own beliefs in an assured manner. Pupils have a good understanding of the liturgical year and of key celebrations during the year. They lead and take responsibility for shaping activities with a religious character, both in the school and in the wider community. At a secular level, they enjoy celebrating their own and others' achievements in 'Star Assemblies' and work well together to promote the school ethos.

Pupils response to and participation in collective worship is outstanding; they act reverently and respectfully. They demonstrate good understanding of different forms of prayer and are eager to take part in, lead and prepare prayer and liturgy, which they do with confidence. Parents and parishioners are regularly invited to share in the school's worship activities. The parish priest, a frequent and welcome visitor to school, regularly leads the pupils in worship.

## **LEADERS AND MANAGERS**

### **How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School**

<b>1</b>
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Leaders and managers are outstanding at promoting the Catholic life of the school. Throughout recent difficulties all members of the school community have displayed caring, Christian support for each other that is exemplary. The chair of governors has shown skills and dedication that far exceed the parameters of her role. A new head teacher takes up post in September 2011 and the school is very well placed to continue to progress and develop. The associate head teacher, who has been in post for this academic year, and the school's deputy head teacher have guided the school calmly and carefully through the year ensuring that progress has been made and targets achieved; their leadership skills are to be commended. Parental questionnaires confirm how well the school has been guided through recent difficulties and how supportive school managers and leaders are of the whole community. The Catholic mission of the school is given the highest priority and this is evident at every level of school life. The subject leader for RE is an excellent and enthusiastic role model; she is skilled in providing advice and support for colleagues. Targeted and coherent planning and actions detailed in the School Development Plan ensure continuous improvement in both the Catholic life of the school and the RE curriculum. Thorough induction procedures for new staff members are in place and staff training is a priority.

Leaders and managers use a good range of strategies to monitor and evaluate provision for RE. During inspection an excellent lesson observed in Key Stage 1 focused on the story of Bartimeus. Pupils were able to retell the story confidently and in detail using a variety of media including paint, drama, book making and ICT. They were also able to empathise with the blind character in the story through a well designed activity. A lesson in Key Stage 2 explored religious questions that are difficult to answer. The pace of learning was good, pupils with different learning styles were well catered for and pupils with special educational needs were suitably supported by a skilled teaching assistant. The school has been particularly successful in challenging potentially high attaining pupils and this has resulted in excellent standards of attainment at Level 5 in Key Stage 2, particularly in AT2 (Reflection on meaning). Staff meeting

time is used to provide in service training for teaching staff in order to ensure their continuous development. The planned development to improve sex and relationship education will further enhance provision in RE. Staff have already been trained to deliver the 'This is my Body' programme and there are plans to implement this in 2011.

The governors are enthusiastic and knowledgeable; they are outstanding in their commitment to the school. Governors provide effective challenge and support regarding the Catholic life of the school. They are extremely committed, have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and put the well being and development of the whole child at the centre of their work. Governors are actively involved in the school community and have positive relationships with the staff and pupils. Through careful monitoring and evaluation they are well informed on matters relating to curriculum RE and the Catholic Life of the school and have a good understanding of current achievements and future developments in RE.

Leaders and managers effectively develop partnerships with other providers and organisations. The school is involved in a wide range of partnerships that broaden the outlook of pupils and serve to develop an understanding of their role as citizens in the local, national and global community. Well established links with St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Wesham and Saint Ignatius' Catholic Primary School, Preston give the pupils an experience of two very different, but nevertheless vibrant school communities. The pupils' work in supporting a school in Malawi is an excellent example of the children living their faith. Other well established links with the diocese, the parish and community organisations provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to experience and enjoy both religious and secular opportunities.

Curriculum enrichment activities further extend pupils interest in, and knowledge of, other cultures and traditions. Pupils were able to recognize inequality and racism in the story of the life of Martin Luther King and Oscar Romero but surprisingly were not aware of the racism that still exists in Britain today. They demonstrate an excellent awareness and understanding of their global responsibilities. Collective Worship is inclusive and the spiritual and religious identity of each individual is respected. The RE curriculum promotes attitudes of respect and tolerance for all faiths and those without any particular religious affiliation.

## **PROVISION**

### **How effective the provision is for Catholic Education**

<b>1</b>
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Teaching programmes are designed to address the learning needs of individuals and groups. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and are

able to support and challenge pupils to further their learning. Teaching assistants are well deployed to support the learning of target children, particularly in mixed age classes. A variety of teaching and learning styles alongside good quality resources, including technology, have a significant impact on raising standards. Activities such as art, role play, hot seating and drama make learning exciting and engage and motivate pupils. ICT is used well to support the RE curriculum.

Pupil progress is presently recorded termly. The school's plan to introduce a more formal termly tracking system (in line with numeracy and literacy) will improve monitoring and evaluation and ensure that under achievement is identified early and challenged. The school's creative curriculum allows for teaching to focus outside the recommended scheme 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' in order to develop original and innovative thinking. The use of 'I can' targets focuses learning in a language that pupils can access and provides clear improvement strategies to progress learning.

The curriculum provided meets the needs of pupils and fulfils the requirements of the Bishops' Conference very well. Equal access to learning for all is ensured through creative child-centred planning, child-led activities, and a balance of teaching styles. Support staff are particularly committed to ensuring that pupils with additional learning needs have equal access to RE and spiritual development. Emphasis is given to the provision of enrichment activities, such as whole-school focus days or weeks on liturgical events or feasts, visits to churches, a visit to see Pope Benedict, whole school participation in The Big Assembly and through the CAFOD group.

The quality of Collective Worship is good: prayer is central to the life of the school. A range of different worship opportunities are presented to pupils including whole school, key stage and class worship. A whole school assembly by upper Key Stage 2 children during the inspection explored the difficult theme of 'The Trinity'. The pupils used pictures, a hymn, prayers and symbols to inform their audience of pupils and parents about the following Sunday's feast. A class based worship in a Key Stage 1 class similarly focused on the liturgical year as pupils thought about Pentecost and the birth of the Church. They demonstrated a clear appreciation of the awe and wonder of the day and its transforming effect on the apostles. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 focused on how to pray; they looked at Jesus' teaching on prayer, in particular the Our Father. Pupils are enthusiastic about Collective Worship, and are confident in preparing and leading it. However, in spite of weekly whole school and key stage assemblies older pupils spoke of irregular opportunities for child initiated class worship. The worship activities observed during inspection were well prepared and had good pace but they did not provide sufficient opportunities for the pupils to reflect, question or express their own point of view. Therefore, Collective Worship would be improved if all pupils were provided with the opportunity to prepare and lead it at least once

each week and if class and/or pupil participation and reflection time were also included. Parents and parishioners are often invited to share worship in school; responses in parents' questionnaires revealed that this is both valued and appreciated. School-led Mass takes place in church at least once per term, and smaller, more intimate Masses are celebrated in classrooms with invitations to parents.



# SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

**Key for inspection grades:**

Grade 1 **Outstanding**      Grade 2 **Good**      Grade 3 **Satisfactory**      Grade 4 **Unsatisfactory**

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The school's capacity for sustained improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PUPILS How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups</b>	<b>1</b>
• how well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education?	1
❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
❖ pupils' attainment in RE	
• to what extent do pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school?	1
• how well do pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship?	1
<b>LEADERS AND MANAGERS How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the School?</b>	<b>1</b>
• how well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils?	1
• how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for RE and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils?	2
• the extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met?	1
• how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well being?	1
• how effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion?	2
<b>PROVISION How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?</b>	<b>1</b>
• the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in?	1
• the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education?	2
• the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs?	1
• the quality of Collective Worship provided by the school?	2