

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a popular Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school serving the parishes of St. Mary in Langho and English Martyrs in Whalley, affluent areas of the Ribble valley in Lancashire. Pupils come from a wide, mixed catchment area but the majority of pupils live in privately owned homes in areas of high employment and social prosperity. Pupils are mostly of white British heritage. On starting school indicators suggest that the majority of the children's attainment is slightly above the national expectation for the age group. The age range of pupils is from 4 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 40 and there are currently 275 pupils on roll of whom 99% are baptised Catholics. Less than 2% of pupils are eligible for free school meals and 10% have been identified as having special educational needs with 3 children having a statutory statement of special educational need. 13 out of 15 teachers (87%) are Catholics. 11 teachers hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies and 2 are in the process of completing the course.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is an outstanding Catholic school providing children with an excellent Catholic education that strives to ensure pupils achieve high standards in both their academic achievements and personal development. The school has recently gone through a period of significant staff changes and the sustained standards are as a result of the leadership provided by the dedicated headteacher and the school's leadership team working in harmony with able and informed governors. Together they are working to produce high quality leadership at all levels within the school community. Members of staff provide excellent role models dedicated to fulfilling their clearly defined responsibilities and establishing exemplary relationships throughout the school community. Staff and governors form a highly efficient team with a shared vision. The School Improvement Plan seeks constant improvement having identified areas for improvement and put strategic and realistic targets in place to bring about planned improvements. The close monitoring and analysis of pupil progress means that the school can recognise and meet the individual needs of pupils with purposeful teaching and learning strategies. The teaching observed during the inspection was consistently good with outstanding features. The school successfully caters for all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development offering a warm, welcoming and caring environment in which its happy, well-behaved, confident and polite children flourish. The school enhances its curriculum through a range of extra curricular activities being a Fairtrade school and achieving the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Active Mark, Healthy School status and Bronze Eco School Award.

Improvement since the last inspection

Since the last Section 48 inspection the school has continued to develop assessment in curriculum Religious Education in line with its assessment of attainment in Religious Education policy. Children are assessed each term and their work is levelled with the aid of the school's portfolio of levelled work. Individual pupil records of attainment in Religious Education are updated twice during the year.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the school leadership team supported by existing and newly appointed members of staff have put strategies in place to bring about further improvements. The very able governing body both challenge and support the leadership of the school ensuring that the school's capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to embed reviewed lesson planning and linked pupil assessment to incorporate revised *REvision 2000* material produced by the Religious Education Department of the Salford Diocese
- Continue and complete the induction and training of the school's leadership team in monitoring and evaluating curriculum Religious Education

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The enthusiastic and devoted headteacher and the leadership team provide strong leadership in promoting the Catholic life of the school. They are supported, encouraged and challenged in their work by effective and influential governors who evaluate and promote the Catholic life of the school through their designated committee structure. Committees evaluate collective worship and liturgy and the provision for curriculum Religious education, employ faith committed staff and maintain an active staff development policy so that staff feel valued. Most members of staff have either gained or are studying for the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. The chair of governors and parish priest, who is also the designated governor for Religious Education, are regular and welcome visitors to the school. The parish priest actively promotes the school as a Catholic community by way of it being a key facility within the parish. He facilitates the full involvement of parents, children and staff in Masses, the Sacramental Programme and parish events. The central philosophy and clear expectations for the school are set out in the Mission Statement which 'seeks to offer the best possible system of education to meet the needs of the Catholic community'. The development of community cohesion and global citizenship is written into and central to the Mission Statement and witnessed by the school's links to the local and wider community, its work with other schools and its charity work.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship and liturgies is outstanding overall with exemplary practice evidenced by audits, evaluations and observations. The school's prayer and worship policy which provides a clear overview of expectations and an outline of provision for prayer and worship stating that 'opportunities for prayer and worship are integral to the life and purpose of our Catholic school here at St Mary's' and evidence shows that the school works according to the policy. A large number of children attend the Sunday Mass children's liturgy at which the chair of governors is a leader. At special occasion Masses in both church and school children in Years 4, 5 and 6 are actively involved in planning and presenting gospel reflections through drama and music. Plans for whole school collective worship and personal, social, health and community education events are drawn up annually in conjunction with a three year liturgical cycle taking account of global issues and feasts and festivals of other cultures reflecting the school's commitment to community cohesion. Opportunities for children to plan and present age appropriate variety of prayer and worship are provided within class liturgies, assemblies and Masses. The deputy head leads a whole school assembly each Monday and the headteacher leads an awards assembly each Friday to which parents are invited. Weekly key stage assemblies are led by key stage leaders. Each class leads an assembly during the year. During the whole school assembly led by the headteacher during the inspection, which included awards, liturgy, quality singing and drama children were well behaved, reverent and responsive.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good with outstanding features. The school has high expectations of its learners many of whom start school with attainment slightly above the national expectation. The children make consistently good progress in Religious Education as evidenced by the scrutiny of children's work, teacher planning and lessons observed during the inspection. Although teachers use strategies for differentiating pupil work to match ability scrutiny of exercise books indicated that differentiation was mainly by outcome and in some instances tasks lacked consistent challenge for the more able learners. Where challenge was given children rose to the challenge and achieved very high quality work. Teachers use long term, medium term and short term planning. Since the last inspection the school has focused on pupil assessment in Religious Education curriculum as an aid towards raising standards. The school is embedding reviewed curriculum Religious Education lesson planning and linked pupil assessment to incorporate revised *REvision 2000* material produced by the Religious Education Department of the Salford Diocese. The inspector encourages the school to complete this work as a means of raising standards further and tracking pupil progress. The staff of the school work hard to match the Religious Education curriculum to the range of abilities presented by vertically streamed classes. By the end of Key Stage 2 the standards in curriculum Religious Education are generally high.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning are good with outstanding features. The school's Religious Education policy can rightly claim that 'Religious Education is a core subject at St Mary's and the foundation of the educational process in our school'. All lessons observed during the inspection were at least good with some outstanding teaching. Lessons are well planned and organised with clear learning objectives linked to the diocesan assessment targets often identified in teacher planning. The headteacher monitors teaching and learning in curriculum Religious Education through lesson observations, scrutiny of exercise books and teacher lesson planning. The school's monitoring system is aimed at continually improving the performance of teachers and outcomes of monitoring are shared with staff. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject and in the lessons observed during the inspection they set tasks to meet the age and ability of individual children. Marking of pupils work is of a consistently high quality through the school as teachers follow the school's marking policy to bring about improvement. During all the Religious Education lessons observed the children were very well-behaved, demonstrated good subject knowledge and responded readily and enthusiastically to the subject and their teachers. The teacher's enthusiasm for Religious Education expressed during a lesson on 'how words and actions spread the word of God' was infectious and inspired both enjoyment and learning. A further lesson based on the story of Martha and Mary was an exemplar lesson on how to stimulate learning and keep children engaged through consistent thought provoking presentation.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. The Religious Education curriculum meets all national and diocesan requirements and teacher planning seeks to meet the individual needs of the children of St Mary's school. The Religious Education curriculum is based on the Salford diocesan *REvision 2000* programme and its updated elements *Moving the Vision On* guidelines. The diocesan scheme is supplemented by other schemes and a rich array of teaching resources including a list of recommended websites for Religious Education. Interactive whiteboard presentations featured in most lessons observed during the inspection. The school reviews the quality, extent and relevance of the Religious Education curriculum through the school improvement planning cycle. This incorporates the monitoring of pupil work outcomes, pupil responses, schemes of work, teaching approaches and assessment for learning. The significance of curriculum Religious Education in the school is highly visible through the displayed Mission Statement, Religious Education displays celebrating children's work and the presence of religious artefacts. The Religious Education curriculum promotes community cohesion by providing opportunities across the curriculum to encourage shared values and provide opportunities in line with the school's Mission Statement to 'be understanding towards other races, religions and ways of life'. The school uses the diocesan guidelines 'World Religions and People of other Faiths' and celebrates the diversity of faiths and cultural backgrounds through planned visits and inviting guest speakers to the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are outstanding. The headteacher is the committed and dedicated subject leader for Religious Education and is responsible for leading a subject seen as the key to the whole curriculum. The School Improvement Plan is monitored and evaluated by the school governors. Religious Education is a key subject and is monitored and evaluated by the headteacher and school leadership team. This includes the weekly scrutiny of work, discussions with pupils, termly observations of assemblies by the headteacher and the twice yearly scrutiny of work, planning and displays by the school's leadership team at key stage meetings. As part of the school's ongoing quest to raise standards and develop the leadership team the school plans further induction and training of the school's leadership team in monitoring and evaluating curriculum Religious Education. The inspector encourages the school to complete this planned action. The parish priest is consulted on matters relating to curriculum Religious Education and gives strong support to planned developments in Religious Education. Parents are kept informed of school activities, curriculum Religious Education and parish activities through newsletters and meetings. The school leadership team, led by the headteacher, governors and staff share the vision of the parish priest which sees 'our school as a core parish facility' and as such places Religious Education and prayer and worship at the very heart of the school community reaching out into children's homes and the wider parish community.