

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Oswald's is a smaller than average-sized primary school situated on the outskirts of Accrington. There are 118 children on roll, with 27% of these being Roman Catholic. The school serves an area of great social deprivation with 95% of the children coming from very disadvantaged families. The percentage of pupils claiming free school meals is 53.3%, which is twice the national average. Currently there are 38% of children from nationalities for whom English is not their first language. The percentage of children with special educational needs is 30.2% which is significantly above the national average with 21.6% at SA, 8.6% at SA+ or having a statement. The school has 7 teaching staff of which 4 are Catholic and 9 teaching assistants of which 6 are Catholic. The school serves the parish of St Mary's Oswaldtwistle and has recently appointed a part time lay chaplain. The school has achieved number of national awards including Healthy Schools Award & Eco School Award.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Oswald's is an outstanding Catholic Primary school. All who attend the school are immediately struck by the safe and caring environment that the school provides so that both parents and children all feel like they are members of one very happy family. All children are offered a Catholic education in a loving and supportive environment where differences are welcomed and celebrated. The Word of God is central to the life of the school. The pastoral and spiritual needs of the learners and their families are very well met. The inspirational headteacher and assistant headteacher have high expectations of adults and children. They are well supported by the lay chaplain and together with the hard working staff they have created an ethos where everyone recognises the need to work together as a "family", showing love and concern for all its members. This work is further enhanced by the support of a very effective and knowledgeable Governing Body. The children love coming to school. This was expressed clearly by the children who skip into class each day and especially the Faith Council who are tremendous ambassadors for the school. They all expressed how very proud they are of all the opportunities given to them. Pupils are friendly, polite and welcoming and their behaviour at all times is exemplary. They work very hard to fulfil the high expectations of the adults who work with them. They enjoyed every opportunity to share their work with the inspectors. The staff and pupils demonstrate a very high level of respect, care and service to others. The outstanding teaching and learning; the creative and imaginative use of the learning environment; as well as the high quality interactive displays, which supports the children's faith journey ensure that all children receive a vibrant Catholic Education. This is also enhanced by the many engaging Acts of Worship observed.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- Outstanding quality of R.E. Teaching.
- Leadership and Management of the School including the Governing Body.
- Acts of Collective Worship particularly those which are pupil led.
- High quality marking in Religious Education.
- High quality of display which reflects the importance given to R.E.
- Quality of welfare for pupils.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The quality of Catholic leadership is outstanding. There is very strong leadership at all levels of the school community, which contributes significantly to the outstanding provision for Catholic Education that the school currently provides. The Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher provide an extremely clear vision for the school. They provide outstanding role models for the whole school community and as a result the development of the

Catholic life of the school is at the forefront of the school's work. They are supported by a knowledgeable and interested Governing Body. The school has a clear plan for developing R.E across the school and this is reflected in the priority it is given. Evidence for this can be found in the school's clear self-evaluation plan, which is based on the 5Ws model. The school is aware of its next steps and has clear plans for implementing them. As a result, the inspectors can verify that this evaluation is both accurate and reflective. The effective Governing Body has a clear sense of vision for the school and is aware of the need to continue to further enhance the school's learning environment so as to ensure that the school can continue to provide a high quality Catholic Education.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS OUTSTANDING:

The school's new Mission Statement is clearly displayed throughout the school. It is known, lived and witnessed to and is evident at every level of the school. Consequently it has developed in the children a great sense of pride and belonging in the whole Catholic family of St Oswald's. This was evidenced in the confident manner in which the children could explain how it had been improved in order to make it more child friendly. The Religious Education of the pupils is at the centre of the Core Curriculum. The staffing and resources devoted to RE are of the highest standard, reflecting its significance and importance in the school. Teaching is consistently good and often outstanding across the school with many examples of excellent practice. Pupils are challenged to engage with the Big Questions regarding the purpose and meaning of life throughout the curriculum. This could be seen in those lessons where children were challenged to implement the gospel message in their own lives. Examples of this were seen in all key stages. Scripture is clearly known, understood and made relevant throughout the school. The staff and pupils demonstrate, and can articulate, the centrality and importance of the Word of God. The importance of this is evident in the displays in classrooms and the hall. In all classrooms there is clear evidence of the centrality of prayer and worship in the children's lives and how this is linked to the R.E curriculum. Pupils are actively engaged in outreach to the local community. This can be seen in the number of charities that the school supports. These are not just the Catholic charities such as CAFOD and St Joseph's Penny, but also other local charities such as the Poppy Appeal.

The Inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgement:

- Overall the standards of attainment, progress and hence achievement are outstanding. As the curriculum is based on the school's mission it is challenging, interesting and fulfilling. The children are developing the age appropriate knowledge and skills. The school has incorporated "The Way, The Truth and the Life" scheme. This is well supplemented by other R.E. resources so that as a result standards of learning are outstanding.
- Work in R.E is clearly as excellent as work in other subjects due to the high priority given to it in school. This was seen by inspectors during the scrutiny of both the R.E and Literacy books. Marking is outstanding as the school clearly recognises the importance of peer assessment and the need to incorporate time for children to fix issues highlighted by the teachers marking. The school has begun to develop a clear and coherent system for tracking the children's attainment in R.E.
- Standards in RE are excellent. The children are encouraged to take the initiative and lead their own learning thereby developing their independence. This is evident in all classes. There are regular visits into and out of school to enrich the RE curriculum, such as participating in joint Diocesan and parish masses and visits from prominent people of other faiths.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING:

St Oswald's is a school where everyone feels welcome. The school's Mission Statement highlights the importance the school places on making sure that all members of the school community are part of God's family. Parents were keen to express their views by saying "Nothing is too much trouble for the staff", whilst another commented that "We are all members of a loving family here where everyone gets on with each other" The importance of the dignity of the individual is clearly evident at all levels. This could be seen in the way that all pupils and staff treated children with special educational needs in a respectful and caring manner so that their self-esteem was raised and their needs met. The appointment of a Parental Support worker has helped to ensure that this wonderfully warm sense of welcome is also provided for all parents. The quality of the outreach support provided by the school has enabled it to improve its levels of attendance, so that they are now well above the national average.

All members of the school community demonstrate a very high level of belonging and ownership of the school. Pupils are given a high level of responsibility in creating and sustaining the school's sense of welcome. The school's Faith Council has provided all the children with the opportunity to have their voice heard in the development of the prayer life of the school.

Parents are very welcome in school and are encouraged to engage in their child's learning. This could clearly be seen in the way that staff from the nursery and reception classes met parents at the start of the school day and discussed with them any concerns that they had. All parents spoke of the great warmth of welcome that they received.

The inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgements:

- All families are welcomed into the school with warmth by the opportunities which are created to visit the school and meet the whole team. Parents voiced to the inspector how the staff went out of their way to make them feel part of the community of St. Oswald's through the opportunities provided of a variety of different social and fund raising activities.
- Parents are kept informed and up to date about the curriculum and events in school through the use of the school newsletter and school website. The school also ensures that the voice of the children is heard and respected. The children were keen to express their opinion about the changes they had brought about in school such as the provision of improved play facilities and the development of the outdoor area.
- Within school relationships are of the highest quality. During the course of the inspection the children's behaviour was outstanding. This is due to the exceptional support provided for all children by the whole staff team.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING:

The staff and pupils demonstrate a very high level of respect, care and service to others. This was witnessed in all classes so children feel confident and secure enough to tend to their personal needs without interrupting the learning of others. The structures and procedures ensure that all pupils and staff feel safe and are treated with respect and dignity. This was evidenced in the way that members of staff cared for children who were hurt or unwell. The Christ-centred ethos is loving, creative, highly positive and fosters understanding, empathy and forgiveness. All pupils and staff feel safe, free to express their opinions and know that these will be valued. Importance and recognition is given equally to all. The budget, staffing and resourcing decisions demonstrate a consistent commitment to Catholic stewardship throughout the school. The school is fully inclusive and lives out its mission to support all children, by ensuring that all children receive additional support in order to fully access the whole curriculum.

The Inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgement:

- The physical, spiritual and mental well-being of each person is central to the school's mission. The school is a very caring community where everyone is valued! Children listened respectfully to other pupils' ideas during lessons.
- Calm support is offered by sensitive adults when children have difficulty remaining on task. Such role models ensure learning and good relationships develop. This could be seen in the way that children with special educational needs were managed within the classroom so that a purposeful learning environment was encountered.
- The school stresses the importance of reaching out beyond its own community so that children feel part of God's world. The charity work is a living example of this as children support CAFOD, St Joseph's Penny and many other charities in special circumstances chosen by the children.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING:

The school provides a variety of worship opportunities for pupils throughout the school (prayer, reflection, liturgies) including small and large groups; which are appropriate to their backgrounds and faith experiences. All children are encouraged to participate in voluntary acts of worship, which are appropriate to the Liturgical Year, for example the children in both Key Stage 1 and 2 pray the rosary together during the month of October. The inclusive and reflective Collective Acts of Worship help pupils to grow in confidence in prayer

and develop a relationship with God. This could be seen in both the assemblies and the child led Acts of Collective Worship which were of the highest quality and where all the children were provided with the opportunity to reflect quietly upon the meaning of the gospel message. Even though the school has only a small percentage of Catholic pupils, the quality of the school's prayer life is outstanding, as it is vibrant and inclusive. Due to the relatively long distance to the parish church of St Mary's Oswaldwistle the school does not have the opportunity to regularly attend services there. However, the appointment of a lay chaplain has enhanced the provision of Acts of Collective Worship in school. The Governing Body has shown its commitment to enhance the Catholic life of the school through its encouragement of all staff, and especially those teachers of other faiths, to obtain the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.

The inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm their judgements:

- There is a daily act of collective worship. These take place in a variety of formats and are thought provoking, uplifting experiences for example those witnessed in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2. Children pray in classes, small groups and individually with great reverence, respect and thought. Those children who are not Catholic either join in or show great reverence to the worship taking place.
- Pupils are comfortable with their feelings and have a good and knowledgeable vocabulary. Each class has a special area of focus. The children know many school prayers and compose powerful prayers for themselves. In many classes there were examples of displays of the children's own prayers.
- Attractive displays which were seen around school are used to show and stimulate prayer opportunities. Hymns, music and singing enhanced the quality and enjoyment of prayer in school.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING:

All staff act as excellent role models for the children and help them in recognising that God is with them in every aspect of school life. Adults and pupils witness to the Mission Statement of the school, which informs everything, and is explicit in policies and the lived experience for the whole community. Adults act as role models of the school's mission and values and as key promoters of the ethos of the school for the pupils and the school community's witness to the wider community. Pupils are confident in witnessing to the beliefs and values of a Catholic community, these are actively encouraged and supported in being pro-active citizens who participate in the decision-making processes at a local and national level. This is seen in the way the school encourages support for various charities so as to promote support for the Common Good.

The Inspectors cite the following evidence to confirm his judgement:

- The entire school community recognises that God is at the heart of the school in their actions and their relationships. They live the word of God. The mission statement is the powerful tool which is used to demonstrate how the school bears witness to a loving God. All members of the school family meet God each day and strive to meet all the challenges involved in this witness.
- The school mission is known and understood by all at appropriate levels. Relationships are outstanding at St Oswald's and a strong sense of teamwork and belonging exist.
- The inspectors noted behaviour was outstanding at all times. Children are respectful of each other. Adults working as a committed team, have high expectations of the children and the children thrive in this atmosphere.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- To embed and further enhance the work of the school's Faith Council.

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making our visit to St. Oswald's so enjoyable when we came to inspect your school for the Bishop. We really enjoyed being with you. Thank you for looking after us so well and helping us to feel very welcome. St Oswald's is an outstanding Catholic school.

We enjoyed being part of your lessons and were sorry not to see everyone. Thank you for showing us so much of your work and activities. We could see that you are very proud of your school and all that you have achieved together. We were particularly impressed that you thought that the most important part of your learning and life together was that you *'felt connected to one another as all part of God's family'*. We know the Bishop will be delighted to hear this.

Your teachers are really helping you to learn very well and we were very impressed by your excellent relationships and behaviour. It was good to see so much of your current Mission Statement coming through everything you are learning; your relationships and the special way you make everyone feel valued. It is wonderful to see a school made up of pupils and adults who get on so well together so that everyone is cared for as a member of God's family. This is a true reflection of being part of a Catholic community where everyone is welcome and has a place.

You continue to use the RE programme very well, whilst your teachers have found many interesting and creative ways to enhance the R.E. they teach you. You are a very creative school and we were most impressed by the way you work together so co-operatively in your lessons. The prayer services we saw were very good and uplifting experiences. Your teachers have started to implement the new CARITAS in Action Scheme well and we have asked them to continue to develop this with you. We have especially asked them to continue to develop the work that you are doing in your Faith Council so as to help you all understand more about each other's faith and your relationship with God.

God bless you all and have a really happy Easter holiday.

Yours sincerely,

Mr A.J Sowerby
Mr D. Burns
(Section 48 Inspectors)

Summary Report to Parents

On 25th March 2015 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 of the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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