

**Department for Formation, Office for Education**

Telephone: 0161 817 2204

Fax: 0161 372 9991

Email: <mailto:education@dioceseofsalford.org.uk>

**INSPECTION REPORT**

**St Mary's R.C. Primary School**

**Line Rd**

**Haslingden**

**Rossindale**

Inspection date	27 <sup>th</sup> March 2014
Reporting Inspectors	Mr. A.J. Sowerby Lead Inspector

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

Type of School	Roman Catholic Primary
URN	
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	125
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mrs Catherine Pilling
Headteacher	Miss Donna McNicoll
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Ms Bernie Booth
Date of previous inspection	

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 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 Mary's Primary School is a smaller than average sized primary school in Haslingden. It is situated in an area of mainly social housing with some privately owned accommodation. There are currently 125 children on roll, of which 57% of pupils are baptised Catholics. The indicative admission number is 20. The pupils who are aged 5-11 years are arranged in a range of mixed aged age classes. Most pupils (82% are from White British backgrounds, with a small number from 18% who are from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is largely in line with the national average. There are currently 20 EAL children in school. The proportion of pupils with additional educational needs is in line with the national average. The proportion known to be eligible for pupil premium is 17.6% and those known to be eligible for free school meals is 12%. The school has gained a number of awards, including Healthy School status, Active Mark, Race Equality Mark Gold Award and Basic Skills Quality Mark twice for sustained improvement in basic literacy and numeracy skills. There are 7 members of the teaching staff of whom 4 are Catholic. Level of attendance is high at in 2013 and has been consistent for many years. No pupils have been excluded in the last 5 years.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Mary's is an outstanding Catholic Primary school. There is a genuinely warm and friendly welcome given to all. All children are offered a Catholic education in a caring and supportive environment where differences are welcomed and celebrated. The Word of God is central to the life of the school. The school works collaboratively with the parish priest and is firmly at the heart of the parish. This ensures the pastoral and spiritual needs of the learners and their families are very well met. The inspirational Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher and R.E Co-ordinator have high expectations of adults and children. 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 an effective Governing Body. The children love coming to school. This was expressed clearly by all children but especially the school chaplains who are a tremendous ambassador 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 hard to fulfil the high expectations of the adults who work with them. They enjoyed every opportunity to share with the inspector their work. 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 engaging Acts of Collective Worship observed.

## **THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE**

- Outstanding teaching and learning
- The wide variety of the learning experiences provided for the children
- The high quality interactive displays
- That all children participate in acts of worship which develop fully their prayer life and spirituality
- The level of care and support given to the children and families who attend the school.
- The high quality leadership and management provided by senior leaders and governors.

## **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 Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher and R.E. Co-ordinator 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 Governing Body, and the parish priest who is a regular visitor to the school. 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 inspector 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 improve the school's learning environment which with the expansion of numbers in recent years has become overcrowded and in need of improvement.

#### **THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD is outstanding:**

The school's 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 Mary's. 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 outstanding across the school with many examples of outstanding practice. Pupils are challenged to engage with the Big Questions of the purpose and meaning of life throughout the curriculum. This could be seen particularly in those lessons where children were challenged to implement the gospel message in their own lives. Examples of this were seen in Year 4 where children were asked to reflect upon the story of the Prodigal Son and how this is linked to the sacrament of reconciliation, in Year 3 where the story of the Last Supper was skilfully linked to the concept of servant leadership and Year 1 where the children were engaged in learning about the signs and symbols of Easter and how this could be implemented in their lives. 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. There is evidence on the displays in the classroom and halls of the importance of this. 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. The home, school and parish links are inclusive, creative and effective. Pupils are actively trained 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 the support the school gives to other local charities such as the local food bank.

#### **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 and 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 inspector during the scrutiny of both the R.E and Literacy books. Marking was consistently good in R.E. The school has begun to develop a clear and coherent system for tracking the children's attainment in R.E. but it is not yet fully embedded in the school something which the school recognises.
- 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.
- The work of the school chaplaincy team has also helped to development of such joint initiatives such as the recent mass for Education Sunday which was a novel yet appropriate way of improving relationships between the school and parish. They have also been involved in the development of Mass Booklet for use in all classes which help explain the centrality of the mass in acts of worship in school.

### **THE QUALITY OF WELCOME is outstanding:**

St. Mary's is a school where everyone feels welcome. Parents were keen to express their views by saying "All children and parents are made to feel welcome at the school" whilst another commented that "A holistic approach sensitively considers the spiritual and emotional well being of all children whilst at the same time achieving excellent academic standards. 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 emotional and special educational needs with great respect and understanding. The school engages in impressive outreach work which meets the needs of the marginalised members of the school community so that all children irrespective of their home circumstances feel valued and appreciated. As one Polish child commented "We are all part of one family at St. Mary's" The quality of the outreach support provided by the school has enabled it to improve its levels of attendance so that they are now 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 Chaplaincy Team provides an outstanding example of this. Parents are very welcome into school and are encouraged to engage in their child's learning. This could clearly be seen in the way that staff from the reception classes and Key Stage 1 met parents at the start of the school day and discussed with them any concerns that they had.

### **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. Mary's through the organisation 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 proposed development of an outdoor area for reflective prayer.
- Within school relationships are of the highest quality. Older children care for the younger ones, pupil chaplains and support staff work hard to ensure playtimes are fun and peaceful. During the course of the inspection the children's behaviour was outstanding.

### **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 where children feel confident and secure enough to tend to their personal needs without interrupting the learning or having their dignity abused. 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 outreach support provided by the school ensures that the needs of parents and young families are met in a structured and sensitive manner. All pupils and staff feel safe and free to express their opinions and know that these will be valued. This was seen during discussions with the children who expressed their opinions about the variety of opportunities provided for them and how they felt empowered to express their opinions. 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 quality of outreach support provided by the school is absolutely outstanding as senior leaders live out the gospel message to care for others in their service to the community. Examples of this work include such staff ensuring that children where necessary are transported to school, provided with a free breakfast and offered counselling and emotional support. Consequently as one child put it "When my mum was ill miss became my fairy godmother".

**The Inspector cites the following evidence to confirm his judgement:**

- The physical, spiritual and mental well-being of each person is central to the school's mission. Children are caring and have a true sense of right and wrong. The school is a very caring community where everyone is valued. Children during lessons listened respectfully to other pupils' ideas. This has ensured that outstanding behaviour occurs across the school and the welfare of children is very well catered for.
- Calm support is offered by sensitive adults when children have difficulty remaining on task. Such role models ensure learning and good relationships develop. 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 chosen by the children.
- The school goes to great lengths to ensure as far as possible children are free from worry and a happy, calm atmosphere is the norm. The school provides a Breakfast Club which provides a calm and ordered start of the day for all those who attend it.

**THE QUALITY OF 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. The inclusive and reflective Collective Acts of Worship help pupils to grow in confidence in prayer and develop their relationship with God. This could be seen in the both the whole school Mass and the beautiful Foundation Stage Act of Collective worship where all the children were provided with the opportunity to reflect quietly upon the meaning of the gospel message. All children are encouraged to develop their own individual prayer life. This is done through the provision of individual reflective prayer journals, prayer boxes and the provision of a prayer room. The spiritual needs of all members of the school community are very well met so that those children and staff who are non Catholic also have the opportunity to develop their own spirituality. Children feel confident in leading prayer services; evidence of this was seen in Year 4 where a child confidently and reflectively led a lunchtime prayer session. The school has strong and developing links with the parish of St. Mary's where they participate in a variety of masses and other celebrations.

**The inspector cites the following evidence to confirm his judgement:**

- The parish priest regularly celebrates Mass in school, to which members of the parish always attend. Key events are celebrated with special masses: the beginning of each school year, the parish and school feast day, Holy Days and at the end of the year.
- There are strong links between the parish and the school particular with regard to the preparation of the children for the Sacraments of Initiation.
- During Advent, Lent and the Easter season the school holds assemblies, liturgies and times of reflection/ reconciliation that are all shared by the whole school community.
- There is a daily act of collective worship. These take place in a variety of formats but also are linked clearly to the Liturgical Year. Children pray in classes, small groups and individually with great reverence, respect and thought.
- 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 Gospel values are clearly evidenced throughout all the policies and procedures and have a significant impact on learning and the life of the 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 of 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. The staff and pupils feel confident and secure in their witness to Christ, the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. Pupils are confident in witnessing to the beliefs and values of a Catholic community and 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 promotes support for various charities so as to promote support for the Common Good. An explicit Catholic culture permeates the whole of school and is clearly identifiable through relationships, decision-making and actions.

**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. All 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 Mary's and a strong sense of teamwork and belonging exist.
- The children have a highly defined sense of fairness and justice. They know their responsibilities in terms of equal opportunities, stewardship and reconciliation.
- The inspectors noted at all times behaviour was outstanding. Children are respectful of each other. Adults working as a committed team have high expectations of the children and in this atmosphere the children thrive.

**AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

- To continue to develop creative assessment in R.E.
- To continue to embed the School Chaplaincy Team so that they are fully involved in the development of the Catholic Life of the School

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making my visit to St Mary's so enjoyable when I came to inspect your school for the Bishop. I really enjoyed being with you. Thank you for looking after me so well and helping me to feel very welcome. St. Mary's is an outstanding Catholic school.

I enjoyed being part of your lessons and was sorry not to see everyone. Thank you for showing me so much of your work and activities. I could see that you are very proud of your school and all that you have achieved together. I was 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'*. I 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 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 have started using your new RE programme and are doing very well. You are a very creative school and I was most impressed by the way you work together so co-operatively in your lessons. The prayer services I saw were very good and uplifting experiences. Your teachers have started to develop an excellent way of assessing your knowledge of R.E. and I have asked them to continue to develop this with you. I have especially asked them to continue to develop the work that School Chaplaincy Team are doing so as to help you all understand more about your faith and relationship with God.

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

Yours sincerely,

**Mr A.J Sowerby**  
**(Section 48 Inspector)**

## Summary Report to Parents

### CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

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### AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

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- To continue to embed the School Chaplaincy Team so that they are fully involved in the development of the Catholic Life of the School