

INSPECTION REPORT

The Divine Mercy RC Primary School
20 Blue Moon Way, Rusholme
Manchester
M14 7SH

Inspection date March 2011

Reporting Inspector Miss P J Jones

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

Type of School	Primary School
URN	135648
Age range of pupils	eg 3-11
Number on roll	428
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Mr G Young
Headteacher	Mrs A Walsh
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Mrs P Sullivan
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable – new school

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

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Divine Mercy Roman Catholic Primary School opened in September 2009 following the closure and amalgamation of St Edward's RC Primary and Bishop Bilborrow Memorial RC Primary Schools. The new school serves the parishes of St Edward's and English Martyrs. The school can provide up to 480 places and 120 places in the Foundation Stage. There are currently 428 pupils on roll, of which 150 are of the Catholic faith, 144 Christian and the remaining are Muslim, Hindu, other religions or no religion. There is a waiting list for places in the Early Years. The school has regular in year admissions for all year groups as well as international arrivals. This leads to a high mobility rate of 27%. There are 30 different languages spoken in the school and 17 different ethnicities. There are high levels of economic disadvantage and 46% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The Headteacher from St Edward's was appointed as the new Headteacher of Divine Mercy for September 2009 and remained in post until his retirement in August 2010. It was through his significant leadership, management and interpersonal skills with the support of the governing body and very able leaders that Divine Mercy is providing a distinctive and inclusive catholic school for the diverse community that it serves. A new Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and other senior leaders were appointed from within the school for September 2010. These appointments have maintained stability and continuity for the school to raise attainment and increase the aspirations of the pupils and wider community. The further appointments of new and experienced teachers as well as support staff are enabling the school to move forward together in developing their potential in serving the needs of the school. There are 21 full time teachers of which 12 are Catholic, 6 are non Catholic and 3 teachers have the Catholic Teachers' Religious Certificate.

The Divine Mercy School Governing Body was established from January 2010, combining governors from the previous two schools with five new parent governors. A new Mission Statement involving all the stakeholders of the school was established during the spring term 2011 through a true Christian spirit of partnership that clearly demonstrates the ABC of Divine Mercy, asking for God's mercy, being merciful and completely trusting in Jesus. The appointment of a school chaplain who visits the school a number of times a week has greatly enriched the spirituality of the school and also in providing advice and guidance for all the staff.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

The Divine Mercy is a good Catholic school with many outstanding features. The dedicated leadership team is committed to making improvements and raising standards for the benefit of the pupils and it is encouraged and supported in its work by the recently established governing body and staff of the school. Together they have a real sense of purpose in establishing a Catholic school which reflects the teachings of Jesus Christ. The school puts the children totally at the centre for all aspects of school life and it is highly significant that no child is withdrawn from religious education or collective worship in the school. This is due to the overwhelming majority of parents being supportive of the Catholic ethos and teaching of the school. Indeed, the Catholic life of the school is central to its character and spirit that produces a warm, welcoming and caring environment in which all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are of a high standard. Pupils are very happy, well behaved, polite and friendly. The School Council are a credit to the school in demonstrating their love of their new school building and all the new friendships that have been made between the two amalgamated schools. This was clearly evident in the manner in which the children show respect for one another, their feelings of safety, security and being valued by all members of staff. The outstanding work of the Deputy Headteacher in her role of Child Protection and Safeguarding and the school's involvement in the many outside agencies for the vulnerable and most at risk pupils with many special educational needs children is commendable in nurturing and valuing each child in this school.

Improvement since the last inspection

This is not applicable as The Divine Mercy is a new school in a £6.5 million landmark building.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is accurate in matters relating to the Catholic life of the school and Religious Education. The staff and governors are united in their approach to raise standards and, with the planned rigour that is being undertaken to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the new religious educational scheme The Way, The Truth and The Life, the capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement the revised Religious Education Scheme 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' throughout the school ensuring continuity between classes through planning, monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning
- Provide the necessary in service training for staff and governors to be fully aware of the demands of maintaining The Divine Mercy School as a living worshipping community in the local area
- Continue to inspire and motivate staff in their planning, delivery and evaluation of Collective Worship throughout the school

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The dedicated Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and senior management team are passionate in providing strong Catholic leadership for the school. Governors are actively involved with the Headteacher and senior leadership in leading the Catholic life of the school with many governors giving their own time to support pupils in school during the week as well undertaking training and attending liturgical and other school events. The high prioritisation of funding for religious education resources, in particular for the new RE scheme demonstrates the leadership of the school as true witnesses to the catholic faith fully in action. The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and is totally committed to supporting and encouraging the staff. Indeed, the appointment of a school chaplain has furthered the spirituality of the school which is very much appreciated by the staff and pupils. The governors are gaining in knowledge about their school and govern it effectively through their committee structure. The recently written Mission Statement involved all stakeholders of the school for in service training to reflect on the school's Mission within the community to keep Jesus in our hearts and the children at the centre of all aspects of its life. Parents are kept well informed about the school through newsletters and the school's colourful and informative website. Parents spoke highly and enthusiastically about the school and were very proud of all that this new school has already achieved and in particular the support given for those parents in challenging circumstances with the counselling services provided by the school (eg Place to Be, Webster Stratton). The school has an active PTA that is working with the school in their fund raising events as well as promoting and celebrating the diversity and cultures of the school community eg a recent Indian evening was organised and well attended. The school promotes community cohesion by helping all learners to appreciate the diversity of people's religious beliefs, backgrounds and circumstances. Each week pupils take home the Wednesday Word in order to spread the teachings of each Sunday's Gospel to all the school's families regardless of their religious background. This demonstrates the school's commitment in putting the Catholic mission into practice within the community it serves.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship is good with outstanding features. The school's prayer and worship policy provides guidance for all staff to help them to promote the school as a real living and worshipping community. Collective worship is an integral part of the daily life of the school and the pupils are clear about what is expected of them from the quiet reflective music played as they enter the hall, appropriate hymn choices and inviting the children to sit silently and reflect on their work and actions from the previous week. Good questioning about previous Lenten Sunday Gospels demonstrated outstanding learning from the pupils. There was effective recognition for pupils who are achieving well in school and their improving attendance. There is a voluntary Mass before school once a week led by the school's chaplain for all members of the school community. These Masses are well attended and a timetable for each class to prepare and attend Mass is in place. Very effective use of ICT with the responses for Mass and words for the hymns was evident at the Mass attended and within the assemblies. The hymn singing and reverence displayed by the children during Mass and within assemblies was outstanding. A rota of whole school and phase assemblies led by staff with pupils' involvement through class assemblies has enriched the prayer and worship of the school. Assemblies are carefully planned to link in with the Religious Curriculum, the Wednesday Word, the liturgical year and Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning. Children respond positively and very reverently during collective worship as witnessed in the assemblies for Key Stage 1, Upper Key Stage 2 and with the whole school which was led by the religious education co-ordinators Year 1 class who sang, danced and celebrated Mother's Day. The message from the Upper Key Stage phase assembly 'How can we be witnesses' was distributed to each class to live out during the week and at home. The development of the school's Prayer Garden will further the reflection and meditation for all members of the school community.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and Standards in Religious Education are good. The school has recently started the new RE Scheme, The Way, The Truth and The Life and a great deal of work has been undertaken by the leadership of the school, in particular, the Religious Education co-ordinator to plan, monitor and assess the pupils' progress. The standards achieved in Religious Education are greatly aided by the strong Catholic life of the school which is a constant presence in the school through prayer and worship opportunities, wonderful displays of religious work including liturgical themes and excellent relationships. The school experiences a high rate of pupil mobility with nearly 60 pupils joining the school last year and just under 40% having English as a second language. These two factors have a significant impact on standards of attainment. However, the scrutiny of children's work with the new scheme and previous assessment activities show that marking is of a high standard and showing that progress is being achieved. Teachers are becoming more familiar with the high expectations required to show attainment of the pupils that can clearly demonstrate what they know about the topic being taught and how they can put this knowledge into practice within their daily lives. The best marking seeks to improve the children's work by asking thought provoking questions and suggesting how children might improve their work through the effective marking scheme, two stars and a wish. Clear learning objectives through the WALT system are used consistently throughout the school and differentiation is developing within lessons with staff supported by very able teaching assistants.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The overall quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good with some outstanding features. The senior leadership monitored the quality of teaching recently and the inspectors agreed with the majority of the outcomes from the lessons observed during the inspection. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. Lessons are based on the new RE scheme *The Way, The Truth and The Life* and teachers are using the guidance from the medium term and weekly plans from the scheme and/or adapting the lessons appropriately for the topic being taught. The teaching content and the work set for children in Religious Education are appropriate for each age group and offer a variety of methods by which the children can enjoy and record what they have learned. This included hot seating, role play and written work. In all lessons observed during the inspection the children were well behaved, attentive and responsive to thoughtful and stimulating lessons that covered all abilities. This was exemplified during lessons being taught about the consecration at Mass (Year 2 and Year 3) and the pupils being taught about understanding that the bread and wine are transformed into Jesus' Body and Blood. A similar lesson was observed in Year 4 with their understanding of what happened on Holy Thursday with the children introduced to other vocabulary eg covenant, transubstantiation. Throughout the lesson observations effective use was made of ICT power points, video clips and worksheets to assist the children. Challenging questions were very well used by Year 6 teachers to enable an understanding of the Stations of the Cross and how they are important to us in our daily lives. Effective use was made of talking partners throughout the lessons to allow the children to share their ideas, feelings and comments.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is good. The Divine Mercy puts religious education at the centre of all its work and the significance of curriculum Religious Education in the school is highly visible through bright and attractive displays in classrooms and shared areas celebrating children's work, the presence of religious artefacts and understanding the liturgical year. The school has benefited from a skilled artistic teaching assistant who has provided high quality liturgical banners and displays evident throughout the school building. Although the school has only recently started to implement *The Way, The Truth and The Life*, it is evident that a great deal of work has been undertaken to prepare the staff in their knowledge and understanding of the scheme and the inservice training that has occurred for staff and governors to promote the new curriculum. The use of different exercise books for work and a separate book for assessment has raised awareness for all in the school. The Religious Education curriculum promotes community cohesion through its strong links with the parish community and the wider community by providing opportunities across the curriculum to promote shared values and appreciate and respect other faiths and cultures.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education is outstanding. The new co-ordinator is inspirational and totally committed to the Divine Mercy as a school that provides a real Catholic presence for all of its work. She is very well supported by the outstanding Catholic leadership of the Headteacher who has placed Religious Education as the core priority in the school. The Headteacher keeps the governors informed about the Catholic life of the school through her termly reports to governors, she visits classes to discuss religious education and looks for opportunities from other faith traditions to come into school to share their traditions. The governing body recognises Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school as priorities and this is evident through their commitment to the new RE scheme and by taking an active part in collective worship and celebrations in the school. An extensive review of the quality of teaching and learning and levels of achievement in religious education has been undertaken and a rigorous process for assessment for learning in religious education is well underway. This has been realised through the recording in pupils' books, personalised target, raising teacher and pupil expectations, involving parents in the process. The involvement of the consecrated lay sisters from the parish of St Edward's in the preparation of the sacraments has been effective in assisting the staff in the school. The religious education development plan clearly demonstrates the work already in hand in developing the quality of teaching and learning in religious education, improving the rates of pupils' progress and the desire to make the teaching of religious education the very best it can be.

