

**INSPECTION REPORT**

Telephone: 0161 817 2204

Email: [education@dioceseofsalford.org.uk](mailto:education@dioceseofsalford.org.uk)

**Inspection carried out Under Canon 806  
and in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

**Name of School St Alphonsus**

Inspection date 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019

Reporting Inspectors: Claire Harrison and Marie Kwiatkowski

Type of school	Primary
URN	106360
Age range of pupils	3 - 11
Number on roll	212
Appropriate authority	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	Sara Rocca
Headteacher	Tina Birds
Religious Education Subject Leader	Nicola Rooney / Bernadette Towey
Date of previous inspection	June 2014

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Catholic Leadership	1	
The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)	1	
Religious Education (incorporating Word)	1	
Collective Worship	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

## **CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL**

St Alphonsus RC Primary is a Roman Catholic School situated in the Diocese of Salford and is maintained by Trafford Local Authority. The school serves the amalgamated parishes of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Moss Side and St Alphonsus, Old Trafford. The school currently has 212 pupils on roll with 15 of these pupils accessing 15 hour places in the school nursery. The school is in the highest deprivation quintile (20%) in the country. 35% of learners claim free school meals and 42% receive a pupil premium grant. There are 9 looked after children within school. Of the pupils on roll, 32% have English as an additional language, 14% have a special educational need with 2 pupils in receipt of an EHC plan. There are 9 class teachers, 7 are Catholic and 3 have the CCRS qualification. The Headteacher has been in post since 2002. 28% of pupils that are Catholic.

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

- **The affirming atmosphere of teamwork coupled with a shared common mission of all staff to ensure that Jesus is at the centre of every aspect of school life.**
- **Leadership at all levels has significantly contributed to the outstanding practice witnessed in this school.**
- **Polite, confident, happy, well-behaved children who articulate their pride and joy in attending St Alphonsus.**

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING**

St Alphonsus is a welcoming and inclusive Catholic school offering the children a rich faith experience appreciated by the community and referred to by those interviewed as ‘the beating heart of the school’. Its outstanding Catholic life and Religious Education is firmly centred on the school mission ‘God lives in me. I am his witness. I respect everybody and everybody respects me’ ensuring that its ethos remains true to the Catholic Church’s mission in education. It strives to provide the very best outcomes for all pupils. This vision is shared by the strong school leadership, governors and dedicated staff team, who place the spiritual and moral development of pupils as their highest priority. The school fosters positive relationships with families with a strong sense of belonging as stated by one parent ‘they really do care for us and I love that about this school’. The overall effectiveness as a Catholic school is outstanding. Consequently, pupils are able to thrive and enjoy their learning. High expectations of pupils’ behaviour ensures pupils are happy and visibly enjoy their time at school. The pupils are caring towards one another and reach out to those in need through a variety of charitable acts. They are rightly proud of the school they attend. All areas for development since the last inspection have been fully met. School self-evaluation is a strength of the school with embedded procedures helping leaders know their school well and plan for future school developments and improvements.

## **THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING**

There is a clear sense of purpose from leaders at all levels based on the very effective Mission Statement which remains central to the ethos and life of the school. This is reviewed regularly and is understood by all within the community and allows children to have an understanding of their role within the Catholic life of the school. The enthusiasm all within the leadership team bring to their respective roles in developing the Catholic life of the school is a definite feature of the school – maintaining a Catholic ethos is given the highest priority. This is evident in all aspects of the school work: from the prayer areas seen in each class, pupils’ attitudes towards prayer and worship, the excellent relationships between all groups within the school and the persistent search by school leaders for ways to improve the school for the benefit of their pupils. Governors are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their responsibility with school using the CES audit tool to ensure they appoint those with the right skills and then using these skills to help and support the school moving forward. Governors are assigned to a class and become involved in their journey leading to greater understanding of the impact the school has on their lives. The newly formed ‘Pals of St Al’s’ are taking more responsibility for leading prayer and worship. The ‘Pals’ hold regular meetings with staff to plan their Friday sessions when they go to classes and spread the word of God.

### **THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness) IS OUTSTANDING**

St Alphonsus is a happy, welcoming and inclusive school. The strap line 'Nothing is impossible to a willing heart' drives all that they do. Its excellent Catholic ethos is reflected in the positive attitudes of pupils, the high level of support and care given by all staff and the clear sense of purpose and spiritual direction of the leadership team. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are eager to learn and experience a stimulating and rich curriculum within an atmosphere of love, trust and security. As a consequence, pupils thrive here and are able to develop and practise their faith as maturing Christians. Pupils show trust, kindness and genuine care and respect for each other treating each other as children of God. The quality of relationships within the school is excellent. Pastoral care for the staff and families of St Alphonsus is clearly evident. There is an open-door policy where all are listened to with care and compassion. The school makes use of a CARITAS support worker to offer extra support. Parents speak warmly of their family relationship with school, through the welcome they always receive and the care support and encouragement their children enjoy each day. Parents spoke with pride and love of their school experience with generations of families attending this special place at the heart of their community. The parish priest is a welcome visitor to school. His valuable support and guidance makes a significant contribution to developing the Catholic Life of the school for instance, in his thorough preparation of Scripture lessons – bringing the Word of God alive. The parish based Sacramental programme is well supported by the school.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word) IS OUTSTANDING**

The quality of pupils' work, both in class and in written work, is outstanding and they demonstrate great pride in their work. Books are extremely well presented and give high standards of work in line with the expectations of other subjects. Evidence shows that the school is meeting the 10% timetable requirements for Religious Education. The teaching in Religious Education is consistently effective, evidenced by records of good and outstanding teaching over time. Teachers communicate their faith through their enthusiasm and thorough subject knowledge. They employ a wide range of appropriate teaching strategies, including individual and collaborative work, to ensure lessons are interesting and fully engage all pupils. In lessons observed, pupils concentrate exceptionally well, they have a clear understanding of how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. As a consequence, pupils are highly motivated and display an excellent work ethic and approach lessons with interest and enthusiasm. Pupils relative to their age and ability are religiously literate and engaged young people who use their knowledge, understanding and skills effectively to reflect spiritually and to think theologically. They are fully aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. In a Y3 lesson the pupils spoke about their 'journey in love' and the importance of 'never being weighed down by sin'. The knowledge pupils have of Sacred Scripture is outstanding using quotes to support their discussions and evidenced in their 'Scripture Journal'. All classes have the opportunity to explore the 'Big Questions' deepening their living faith through their responses. The pupils are given opportunities to reflect the living word of God in their lives through a well-planned social justice programme – where differences are celebrated. The pupils follow the comprehensive SMSC programme 'Journey in Love' and SMSC is embedded in school life with events such as 'Black History Month'.

### **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING**

At St Alphonsus, the spiritual life of the children is held in high regard with children being provided with opportunities every day to be involved in prayer and worship. There is a systematic and developmental prayer programme, which runs through school. All members of the school community gather together to worship during assemblies and school masses. The assembly observed during the inspection was well prepared, interactive and engaging. It was led by the 'Pals of St Al's' on the theme, 'What does the cross mean to me?' In both class collective worship and the assembly, there were opportunities for listening to the Word of God, sharing thoughts and quiet reflection. There was evidence that children are planning collective worship in classes and the children gave thoughtful responses in the sessions observed. In each classroom, there is a focal point for worship and during the day, there are a range of prayer opportunities for children; with children being given the opportunity to be the prayer leader for the day. The recently appointed 'Pals of St Al's' are committed and enthusiastic about their role and make a valuable contribution to worship in the school. They are responsible for planning and leading weekly prayer and worship sessions in each of the classes. They talked enthusiastically about their work in the school and leading the children in prayer. During special seasons in the Liturgical Calendar, pupils lead assemblies

and times of reflection. Opportunities are created for the whole school and parish community to celebrate together, demonstrating the glory of God in their lives. There are weekly staff prayer sessions led by the Headteacher, helping the staff to grow stronger together as a team and to reflect and grow in their faith journey. Staff confidently plan and lead prayer and worship within their classrooms.

#### **AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- **To develop further prayer and worship in school in creative and exciting forms including contemplative and meditative prayer.**
- **To continue to enhance the role of pupils leadership in the school.**
- **To ensure the recently appointed Religious Education subject leaders continue to develop their roles in ensuring excellence for all pupils.**