

INSPECTION REPORT

St Clare’s R.C. Primary School Victoria Avenue, Higher Blackley, Manchester M9 0RR

Inspection date 23rd June 2016

Reporting Inspectors Mr Andrew Sowerby
 Miss Sue Molloy

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

Type of School Roman Catholic Primary
 URN 105554
 Age range of pupils 3-11 years
 Number on roll 451
 Appropriate authority The Governing Body
 Chair of Governors Mr William Ryan
 Headteacher Mr Vincent Jones
 Religious Education Subject Leader Ms Caroline Mc Garry
 Date of previous inspection July 2011

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
The quality of the Word 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 Clare's RC Primary School is a larger than average sized Catholic Primary School serving the parish of St Clare's, Higher Blackley, Manchester. It is a two form entry school with Nursery provision for 46 children; all full time. There are currently 451 children on roll, of these, approximately 90 % are baptised Catholic. 68% are white British, the other 32 % are from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, which is a growing trend. 47% of the pupils receive the Pupil Premium, whilst the number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals is 22%. The number of pupils with English as an additional language is 33. The school has a high proportion of pupils with complex educational and social needs, with 6 pupils requiring an Education, Health Care plan. The school provides a wide range of before and after school activities, as well as a Breakfast and After School Club.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Clare's is an outstanding Catholic Primary school. All who enter the school are immediately struck by the wonderfully warm and friendly welcome given to all. As one parent said, "It's simply a beautiful place to be." Every child is provided with a Catholic education in a caring and supportive environment, where individual needs are exceptionally well catered for. The Word of God is clearly central to the life of the school. This ensures that the pastoral and spiritual needs of families and children are very well met. The inspirational headteacher, senior leadership team and staff have very high expectations of adults and children. This can be seen in the way that children are cared for in a calm and supportive atmosphere. An example of this work is the provision of additional support for the high number of vulnerable families that attend the school. This work is further enhanced by the support of a very effective, experienced and knowledgeable governing body.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The warmth of the welcome one receives when entering the school is clearly based upon the teachings of Christ and the gospel values of love, respect and care for the individual.
- The quality of leadership of the inspirational and exceptionally caring headteacher, the strong senior leadership team and the very experienced and effective governing body ensures that the quality of learning is given the highest priority.
- High quality relationships between staff, parents and children are central to the school living out its mission as a Catholic community.
- The bespoke welfare provision for every individual is absolutely outstanding. All members of the school community are prepared to go the 'extra mile' to ensure that children are treated with dignity and respect.
- The quality of the teaching of RE is extremely high, so ensuring that the Word of God is central to the life of the school.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

Driven by a great determination to ensure that the children of St Clare's receive a high quality Catholic Education, the inspirational headteacher, ably assisted by the senior leadership team and staff ensure that there is outstanding Catholic leadership. They are supported by an experienced and well informed governing body. Together they ensure that the development of the Catholic life of the school is at the forefront of their work. Examples of this work include the way in which the headteacher and staff ensure that the welfare of every child who attends the school is prioritised. This is a school where every child really does matter. They provide very clear guidance and support to those members of staff who are not Catholic, so as to ensure that the teaching of RE and the development of the Catholic life of the school has an extremely high priority. The leadership team has a clear plan for developing RE across the school and this is reflected in the priority it is given. Evidence for this can be found in the school's detailed self-evaluation plan, which is based on the 5Ws model. The school is very aware of its next steps and has clear plans for implementing them.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS OUTSTANDING

The school's mission statement is clearly evident in all areas of the school. It is very child centred and reflects the determination of all to ensure that the school provides the highest quality Catholic education. The staffing and resources devoted to RE are of the highest standard, reflecting its significance and importance in the school. Children clearly enjoy RE and were keen to express this to the inspection team during their visit to the school. Pupils are challenged to engage with the 'big questions' of the purpose and meaning of life throughout the curriculum. There are also additional examples of this on the bright and attractive displays that are to be found throughout the school. Scripture is clearly known, understood and made relevant. The recent introduction of the 'Come and See' and 'Caritas in Action' schemes have further enhanced the RE Curriculum, so that it is increasingly creative and vibrant. The school, however, is very aware of the need to ensure that non Catholic staff are well supported through the provision of additional training so as to develop their knowledge of the faith. Standards in RE are equally as high as in other subjects but the school is aware of the need to continually monitor in order to maintain consistency across the school. The school's structured programme of RE assessments are currently being enhanced so that they accurately match the changes in the school's RE curriculum.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

St Clare's provides an exceptionally warm welcome for all who attend the school. Parents were keen to express how all feel included and that any concerns they have are quickly and sensitively dealt with. They spoke with great passion about the lovely family atmosphere and sense of community that exists in the school. As one parent explained, 'when you walk into the school it's like coming into a ray of sunshine'. This, they said, was due to the very approachable headteacher and staff. Evidence of this was observed by the inspection team throughout the school day, where the headteacher and staff greeted children and parents warmly and individually. All parents spoke of the supportive manner in which the staff ensures that the children are made to feel welcome. Children love coming to school. As one child put it, 'This school is great as it's like one big family where everyone really looks after you.' Parents also spoke positively about the high quality communication the school provides as well as the varied programme of additional support, and after school clubs, so that everyone is well informed and included. It is clearly a warm, inclusive and all-embracing establishment, where everyone feels appreciated and cared for.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

The whole staff pay great attention to the pastoral and emotional needs of the children in St Clare's, so that one can truly say that in this school every child does indeed matter. This was witnessed throughout the day in the manner that the staff supported children who had individual medical needs or needed some additional emotional support. This care was provided in a very dignified and supportive manner. The structures and procedures that the school employs to ensure that pupils and staff feel safe and are treated with respect and dignity are of the highest quality. This could be seen in the way that the school ensures that every child can access the full curriculum and each child's individual social and emotional needs are met. Calm support is offered by very sensitive adults when children have difficulty remaining on task. The outreach support provided by the school ensures that the needs of parents and young families are met in a structured and sensitive manner. Examples of this are through the provision a Breakfast and After School Club, which enables all children to feel cared for and the provision of wide range of out of school activities including sports, art and dance. Relationships at St Clare's are exceptional. Pupils and staff are confident in expressing their opinions and knowing that these will be valued. This was observed during discussions with the children who stated how their views were listened to and how they were able to play an active part in the development of the school as a Catholic community and also in the debate held about the European referendum. One example of this work was the way in which the children were included in the development of the outdoor play area. The quality of outreach support provided by the school is absolutely outstanding.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The school provides a wide variety of worship opportunities for pupils throughout the school including small and large groups. Children are provided with the opportunity to pray and reflect in a variety of settings. This was experienced during an uplifting reflection on the theme of 'human dignity' and a lovely celebration of the way in which the children in Key Stage 1 live out the message of the 5Ws in their daily life in school. There are developing links between the parish and the school, particularly with regard to the preparation of the children for the Sacraments of Initiation and the current celebration of the Jubilee Year of Mercy. The home, school and parish links are good. This is due to the commitment of the parish priest and headteacher to work together in order to ensure that the children receive the highest possible quality of Catholic education. Each class has a special prayer focus. The children know many school prayers and compose powerful prayers for themselves. Attractive displays seen around school are used to show and stimulate prayer opportunities. The school's prayer leaders are beginning to have a real impact on the development of the prayer life of the school, they becoming more effective at planning and leading prayer services. The school has developed a beautiful chapel and outdoor prayer garden, which are regularly used by the school chaplains when they prepare and lead their own prayer services. This was witnessed by the inspection team during its visit.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

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. Pupils are actively trained in outreach to the local community. This is seen in the way the school promotes support for various charities so as to promote support for the 'common good'. Examples of this are the regular fund-raising activities organised by the children to support not only the Catholic charities such as CAFOD and St Joseph's Penny but also many local ones chosen by the children themselves, as well as an orphanage in Uganda. The staff have implemented the 'Caritas in Action' scheme well so that the children have a strong sense of social justice. Children are very respectful of each other and their behaviour was outstanding. Adults working as a committed team have very high expectations of the children and in this atmosphere the children at St Clare's thrive.

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- To further enhance the links that exist between the school and the parish of St Clare's in order to improve upon the quality of liturgical celebrations.

Department for Formation, Office for Education

23rd June 2016

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making our visit to St Clare'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 Clare'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'*. 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 we were most impressed by the way you work together so co-operatively in your lessons. The prayer services we saw were good and uplifting experiences. Your teachers have started to develop an excellent way of teaching RE using the 'Come and See' scheme and we have asked them to continue to develop this with you so as to help you all understand more about your faith and relationship with God. We have also suggested that the school continues to develop the links you have with the parish of St Clare's so that they continue to develop your knowledge of the Catholic faith.

God bless you all

Yours sincerely,

Mr A J Sowerby and Miss S Molloy
(Section 48 Inspectors)

Department for Formation, Office for Education

Summary Report to Parents

On 23rd June 2016 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 on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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