

**SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT**



ST. FRANCIS ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Ellenbrook Close Gorton Manchester M12 5LZ

Inspection date April 2009
 Reporting Inspector Mrs. J. Schofield
 Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Catholic Primary
 URN 105529
 Age range of pupils 3-11
 Number on roll 221
 Appropriate authority The governing body
 Chair of Governors Mr. Patrick Devlin
 Headteacher Mrs. Louise Frize
 Religious Education Co-ordinator Mrs. Elizabeth McNulty & Mrs. Louise Frize
 Date of previous inspection February 20006

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school	1	
The quality of Collective Worship	1	
Achievement and standards in Religious Education	1	
The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education	2	
The quality of the Religious Education curriculum	1	
Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education	1	
<i>The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements</i>		

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Francis is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parish of Sacred Heart and St. Francis in Gorton. The school is situated in an inner city area of Manchester which is well below average in all socio-economic aspects. Pupils are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds and ethnic groupings. 49% of pupils speak English as an additional language. 42% of learners are entitled to free school meals. There are presently 221 pupils on roll of whom 121 are baptised Catholics. The age range of learners is from 3 to 11 years and the school's admission number is 30. The school has identified 26 pupils as having special educational needs. 7 pupils have a statutory statement of special educational need and 6 further pupils are awaiting a statement or additional funding to support their needs. There are currently 11 full time and 1 part time teaching staff of whom 6 (50%) are of the Catholic faith.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Francis is an outstanding Catholic school with the Mission Statement lying at the heart of its work. Its inclusive ethos is a strong foundation upon which respect for differing faiths and cultures encourages pupils to worship, learn and play together. The school offers a warm, welcoming and caring environment in which all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted. Pupils are proud of their school. They are well motivated and display good attitudes to their learning. Their behaviour based on mutual respect and co-operation is exemplary. The active governing body has a well developed role in monitoring the work of the school. Governors are encouraging and fully supportive of the positive force the school plays in the whole community it serves. Parents are very committed to the school and involved in the school's daily life.

Improvement since the last inspection

Since the last inspection a new deputy head has been appointed. The school has facilitated good staff training for the newly appointed and newly qualified staff. The key issues raised in the last Section 48 inspection have been fully addressed. Systems for the observation of teaching and learning are in place. Assessment procedures are well developed and the levelling of pupils' work is closely linked with diocesan assessment materials. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is well supported by governors and staff in the management of the school. The entire staff of the school work as a team in support of each other. Governors and parents are well-informed regarding curriculum provision and the progress of pupils.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate. The governors and headteacher share a vision for the future development of the school. The headteacher and Religious Education co-ordinator are committed to continuing the development of all aspects of the Catholicity of the school together with provision of quality education to meet the particular needs of all the learners. There is good evidence in the effective monitoring of the curriculum and prayer and worship that every member of the school community is aware of the goals the school is aiming to achieve. The school has outstanding capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

Although there are no significant issues to be addressed the school is encouraged to develop the following priorities as identified in its own self-evaluation.

- Further develop liturgies which will enable pupils to explore Christ in small groups.
- Facilitate staff training on the introduction of *Moving the Vision On* in Upper Key Stage 2.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. All aspects of the daily life and work of the school are a true reflection of its Mission Statement which is prominently displayed throughout the school. The leadership team promotes a positive ethos and is successful in providing an excellent Catholic education whilst embracing pupils and staff of diverse faiths. The parish priest plays an important role in the religious life of all pupils. He visits the school regularly, is involved in staff training, pastoral support and in the delivery of the Religious Education curriculum when requested. The governors' work of monitoring aspects of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school is enhanced through their class links, headteacher reports and their attendance at assemblies and religious celebrations. The chair of governors meets regularly with the headteacher. A shared vision for the ongoing development of the Catholic life of the school ensures the appointment of committed Christian teachers and the funding for ongoing staff and governor training. The good relationships that exist between the home, school, parish family and the wider community are a positive strength. There is strong support for the school from the parents who appreciate the care, guidance and support extended to every pupil. Parents and parishioners are invited to share in school Masses, assemblies and liturgical celebrations. The school promotes community cohesion at all levels which is a great strength in this ethnically diverse community.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The provision for collective worship in the school is outstanding. Opportunities for prayer and worship are carefully planned, organised, celebrated and recorded. On Holy Days and special feasts pupils are joined by parishioners when Mass is celebrated in the school hall. The youngest pupils alternate each week with Key Stage 2 for the celebration of Mass in the nearby church. Each Mass is planned by the teacher and the pupils take a full and active part in the Mass through readings and music. In one such celebration observed during inspection every pupil in Year 5 was involved. It was a rich and meaningful celebration of the Eucharist for everyone present and enhanced by delightful singing. Assemblies prepared by classes are carefully planned to reflect the Religious curriculum, the liturgical year and special feasts and festivals. The simple prayers in pupils' workbooks together with the opportunities offered for spontaneous prayer and quiet reflection in classroom worship are evidence of an awareness of the importance of prayer in their lives. It is intended to develop liturgies further in order to enable pupils to explore Christ in small groups. The school is committed to providing a variety of spiritual opportunities and experiences which are relevant to all the children taking into account their different personal, social and religious development in respect of race and culture.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are outstanding. The level of attainment when pupils enter the school is often well below average in language and communication skills. They settle quickly in Foundation Stage so that by the end of Key Stage 1 their progress and achievement are good. In Reception the young learners expressed good ideas why people wanted to be friends of Jesus. They also understood why Judas who was not a good friend was forgiven by Jesus. By the end of Key Stage 1 learners are beginning to write short sentences of independent work. Early in Key Stage 2 independent writing continues its development as when the events of the Last Supper were written as a diary extract. By the end Key Stage 2 pupils have a good factual knowledge of their faith and use appropriate religious vocabulary so that progress is very good. There is regular monitoring of lessons, planning and learners work books. This enables the school to ensure consistency in the delivery and coverage of the Religious Education curriculum. In the lessons observed during inspection learners were able to build on their prior knowledge. They were always attentive listeners, eager in their responses to questioning and responsible in their attitudes to working with partners. Teachers set activities appropriate to pupils' ages and abilities and use their teaching assistants well to help learners achieve at an appropriate level. The introduction of circle time encourages pupils in the development of Christian values and respect for themselves and others. Pupils are increasingly aware of the needs of others and give generously to a number of local and world- wide charities.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good with some outstanding features in both key stages. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and use a wide range of techniques and resources to encourage and support learning and meet the needs of all learners. The effective use of teaching assistants has a positive impact on the achievement of the pupils. In Year 6 a whiteboard was used to show dramatic scenes from the musical “Jesus Christ Superstar”. The events portrayed, which occurred in the garden of Gethsemane, acted as a stimulus for the discussion which followed. Pupils expressed great empathy with the characters of Jesus, Judas and Peter explaining the feelings of each and the reasons they had acted in a particular way. The school makes good use of drama and role play to enable less able groups to best access the Religious Education curriculum. Challenging activities and good classroom management skills are a strong feature of teaching. In all the lessons observed during inspection the pupils responded with enthusiasm to effective questioning. They were also encouraged to ask questions themselves to help them develop their understanding and so achieve well. Lesson planning identifies clear learning objectives, teaching strategies and appropriate differentiation in tasks to meet the abilities of each group in the class. Teachers ensure that learners are aware of the purpose of each lesson and use plenary sessions at the end to reinforce and assess the pupils learning. Work scrutinies indicate that good marking raises pupils’ awareness of the ways they can improve their work. All teaching areas are bright and stimulating learning environments with colourful displays of pupils’ work.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The curriculum for Religious Education is outstanding. Policies for Religious Education and prayer and worship are in place. No pupil is withdrawn from Religious Education lessons. The time allocated to religious lessons is in line with national and diocesan requirements. Teachers are knowledgeable and confident in the consistency of their delivery of the Salford diocesan schemes *REvision 2000* and *Moving the Vision On*. The school intends to provide further staff training on the introduction of *Moving the Vision On* in Upper Key Stage 2. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is well established. Teaching assistants play an important role supporting teachers and pupils within the classroom. Good resources are well used and information communication technology is a valuable support to the delivery of the curriculum. School and class Masses together with assemblies and liturgical celebrations have a positive impact in supporting, enriching and extending the Religious Education curriculum at the school. The school plays a full supporting role in the parish based preparation of pupils for the Sacraments of Initiation. Through the study of world religions and the school’s links with other schools on community cohesion projects there are many opportunities to promote pupils’ understanding of, and respect for, other faiths and cultures.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The headteacher has correctly assessed the leadership and management of Religious Education to be of outstanding quality. The on-going development of curriculum Religious Education is a priority which affects the life and work of the school and has high priority in the School Development Plan. The shared vision of the headteacher and parish priest, who meet regularly to discuss progress, is strongly supported by the governing body and senior leaders within the school. A new co-ordinator for Religious Education is working alongside the headteacher. In the development of her role she attends the termly co-ordinators’ meetings to discuss any new initiatives. Newly qualified staff and teachers new to a Catholic school have attended diocesan courses and are growing in confidence in their delivery of the curriculum. Aiming to support the staff and further raise standards book scrutinies and the monitoring of teaching and learning through observations are in place. Half termly assessment procedures are completed helping to give a clear indication of pupils’ knowledge and understanding. In-service training encourages all staff to challenge their own practice and be adventurous and creative in their delivery of the curriculum. Governors are encouraged and welcomed in school for occasions of prayer and worship. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor in school and plays an active role in the religious life of the school community.