

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. JOHN FISHER ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Stanycliffe Lane Middleton Manchester M24 2PB

Inspection date July 2010

Reporting Inspector Mr. J. Brierley

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

Type of School Catholic Primary

URN 105849

Age range of pupils 4-11

Number on roll 201

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair of Governors Rev. Fr. T. Mullins

Headteacher Mrs. A. Kenny

Religious Education Co-ordinators Mrs. E. Ostmeier and Mr. G. Doherty

Date of previous inspection November 2006

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	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. John Fisher is a slightly smaller than average sized voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parish of St. Agnes and St. John Fisher, Middleton. The school is situated approximately 2 miles from the town centre. Most pupils are of White British heritage and are drawn from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Indicators suggest that 50% of children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills broadly in line with the national expectation for the age group. The skills of the remaining 50% of children are below or well below national expectation. The age range of pupils is from 4 to 11 years. The indicative admission number is 30. There are currently 201 pupils on roll. 163 of the pupils are baptised Catholics. 46 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs with 8 children having a statutory statement of special educational need. 12% of the children are entitled to free school meals. All 9 teachers (100%) are of the Catholic faith.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St John Fisher is an outstanding Catholic school providing children with an excellent Catholic education that strives to ensure pupils achieve high standards in both their academic achievements and personal development. The high standards in the personal development of the children are as a result of the leadership provided by the dedicated headteacher and the school's leadership team working in harmony with able and informed governors. Together they are working to produce high quality leadership at all levels within the school community. Members of staff provide excellent role models dedicated to fulfilling their clearly defined responsibilities and establishing exemplary relationships throughout the school community. The School Improvement Plan seeks constant improvement having identified areas for improvement and put strategic and realistic targets in place. The close monitoring of pupil progress means that the school can recognise and meet the individual needs of pupils with purposeful teaching and learning strategies. The teaching observed during the inspection was good overall. The school successfully caters for all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development offering a warm, welcoming and caring environment in which its happy, well-behaved, confident and polite children flourish. The school cherishes the personal development of its children and provides them with many opportunities to contribute to their school and the wider community as well as offering children additional support through the Rainbow and Pyramid Clubs and high quality special educational needs provision. The school has achieved the Investors in People, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Sports Mark, Enhanced I Can, Healthy School, Extended School and Anti Bullying Awards while working towards the full standard for Eco-schools and BECTA ICT Mark.

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 48 inspection in 2006 the school has developed experiential prayer in planning for weekly class Masses. Strategies for the continuous monitoring of teaching and learning in Religious Education have been put in place and form an integral part of the three year School Improvement Plan. The Salford Diocesan pupil assessment programme has been established.

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to improve is good because the senior leadership team, staff and governors have a shared vision for sustained improvement as evidenced in the use of an effective School Improvement Plan which is aligned to both the school's Mission Statement and Vision of the School Statement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Bring more rigour to the established programme for the monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education as a means of bringing consistency to teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Develop the role of the Religious Education co-ordinators in order to bring more rigour to the monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The devoted headteacher and leadership team provide strong leadership in promoting the Catholic life of the school. The importance attached to the leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school is exemplified by the deputy head and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator being awarded the M.A. Degree in Catholic Leadership with two further members of staff completing their first year of study for the degree. The leadership team are supported, encouraged and challenged in their work by effective and informed governors who evaluate and promote the Catholic life of the school. Governors evaluate collective worship and liturgy and the provision for curriculum Religious education, employ faith committed staff and maintain an active staff development policy so that staff feel valued. All teachers have either gained or are studying for the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. The parish priest, who is also the chair of governors and designated governor for Religious Education, actively promotes the school as a Catholic community by way of it being a key facility within the parish. The central philosophy and clear expectations for the school are set out in the Vision Statement and Mission Statement which seeks 'To create a dynamic interaction between home, parish and school which prepares children's entry into the wider community'. The development of community cohesion and global citizenship is written into and central to the Mission Statement and witnessed by the school's links to the local and wider community, its work with other schools and its charity work.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Provision for collective worship and liturgies is outstanding. The school's prayer and worship policy provides clear aims and objectives for the school community. The staff lead by example and have their own period of collective worship before the beginning of the school day and an annual staff Mass. During appropriate periods in the liturgical year the headteacher leads the many children who choose to come into school before the start of the school day to pray the Rosary. Opportunities for children to plan and present age appropriate and varied prayer and worship celebrations are provided within class liturgies, assemblies and Masses. Every class has a prayer or altar focal point. The parish priest leads a class Mass each week in school to which parents are invited as well as celebrating Mass for the whole school on special occasions. The weekly headteacher led celebration assemblies acknowledge the positive attitude which children have towards their learning. Each key stage gathers each week for further prayer and worship opportunities. The school, parish catechists and parents work together in supporting the children during the Sacramental Programme. During the prayer and worship opportunities observed the children were well-behaved, dignified, reverent and happy participants. This was exemplified by the Year 1 Class being engaged by the two wooden pieces of a clothes peg representing the child while the spring represented God holding them together. Their joyous singing of 'Praise Him', with each child playing a percussion instrument, ensured joyous child participation throughout. The Year 5 prayer and worship provided calm reflection.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are outstanding. Indicators suggest that on starting school individual children's attainment varies from being in line with to being well below national expectation for the age group. By the time the children reach Year 6 they have achieved a good understanding of their faith. The standards achieved in Religious Education are greatly aided by the strong Catholic life of the school which is present through prayer and worship opportunities, displays and relationships and the high moral, social, spiritual and cultural development encouraged by the school's leadership. The high standards achieved by the school in Religious Education can be measured by the attitude, relationships and behaviour of children living by the gospel values. As one child told the inspector, "We are loving and caring for each other. We are all friends." The school monitors pupils through the completion of Salford diocese Religious Education assessments each half term and individual pupil progress and the measuring of achievement and standards in Religious Education is recorded. The scrutiny of exercise books during the inspection indicated that differentiation in children's work is mainly by outcome or by means of teacher and teaching assistant intervention. Exercise books show that in some classes completed exercise tasks need to provide more variety of task and a more consistent challenge to pupils, especially those of a higher ability. A Year 6 lesson based on 'the ministries of children in the school' showed that when challenged by probing questions and a really thought provoking task the children rise to the challenge.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The overall quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good. All lessons observed during the inspection were at least satisfactory and teachers consistently demonstrated good subject knowledge. Lessons are based on the diocesan programme of study for Religious Education. Teachers use computer based short term planning with clearly identified learning objectives. A Year 2 lesson demonstrated how the teacher carefully selected activities to ensure that the children were engaged and on task while making purposeful progress towards meeting the learning objective 'to explore how each person in God's family is to act and be treated'. The Reception class demonstrated how the teacher and teaching assistants work together in order to provide appropriate age related teaching and learning activities so that children meet their learning objective. Having discussed 'caring for pets' with their teacher through the use of captivating resources the children became engaged in lesson objective related continuous provision activities. During all lessons the children were well-behaved and attentive displaying the excellent relationships which exist in the school. The standard of marking is inconsistent through the school and although it is completed regularly by teachers and often recognises and praises good work it does not always match the school's marking policy which seeks 'to encourage and enhance further learning'. The school is encouraged to bring more rigour to the established programme for the monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education as a means of bringing consistency to teaching and learning through the school.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. The Religious Education curriculum meets all national and diocesan requirements and is devised to meet the individual needs of the children of St. John Fisher School. The Religious Education curriculum is based on the Salford diocesan *REvision 2000* programme and is supplemented by other schemes and a rich array of teaching resources. The school reviews the quality, extent and relevance of the Religious Education curriculum through the school improvement planning cycle. This incorporates the monitoring of pupil work outcomes, pupil responses and individual pupil assessment books. It also includes schemes of work, teaching approaches and assessment for learning. The school successfully enriches the Religion Education curriculum through its aim to provide a sense of awe at God's goodness through cross curricular links and by encouraging pupils to live their faith by looking after and respecting all that God has created. Pupils are active members of their School Council, Eco Team, Sustainability Working Party, Friendship Society, Playground Pals and an accredited Forest School. The significance of curriculum Religious Education in the school is highly visible through the displayed Mission Statement, Religious Education displays celebrating children's work and the presence of religious artefacts. The Religious Education curriculum promotes community cohesion and children learn about other faiths and cultures, their festivals and celebrations. Religious Education has a high profile and is under constant review.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are outstanding. The parish priest in his role as chair of governors and designated Religious Education governor has a shared responsibility with the headteacher for monitoring the Religious Education action plan. He is a regular and welcome visitor to the school. The two Religious Education co-ordinators have completed their first year of studies for the M.A. in Catholic Leadership. They provide the school governors with a termly written report regarding Religious Education provision and development. There is a clear educational direction for the teaching and development of curriculum Religious Education which is seen as a core subject by staff and governors. Policies relating to Religious Education are regularly reviewed. The Religious Education action plan is a feature of the School Improvement Plan and a monitoring and evaluation of curriculum Religious Education has been established. The development of the role of the Religious Education Co-ordinators in bringing more rigour to the monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education would aid the planning and development cycle. In a culture of mutual support, teamwork and celebration of individual strengths, morale is visibly high and children thrive amidst excellent relationships. The parish priest, governors, school leadership and staff actively promote their vision statement which proclaims, 'We are a community of faith where teachers and all staff are here to help the children continue in their journey in faith to God. We have to live, breathe and act out the faith in all that we do'.