

INSPECTION REPORT

St Monica's RC Primary School, Flixton, Urmston

Inspection date Thursday 6th February 2014

Reporting Inspector Mrs Susan Gedzielewski
 Mr Brendan Hennessy

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

Type of School Primary
 URN 106356
 Age range of pupils 3-11 years
 Number on roll 352
 Appropriate authority The Governing Body
 Chair of Governors Mr. Andrew Fahey
 Headteacher Mrs Louise Davies
 Religious Education Co-ordinators Mr Neil Price
 Date of previous inspection October 2010

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The quality of the Word of God community	1	
The quality of the Welcome community	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	2	
The quality of Witness	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Monica's is a Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the needs of the parish of St Monica's, Flixton. This is a larger than average size primary school serving a mixed catchment area of social and private housing within the suburbs of Manchester. There are 352 children on roll including 41 part time children in the nursery. 85% of the children are baptised Roman Catholic. Attainment on entry is broadly below average but children leave having made very good progress and results are above national average. The school is predominantly White British with only 2% of children coming from an ethnic minority background. 10% of the children are entitled to Free School Meals. The school currently has 15% of children on the Special Needs Register.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING

St Monica's is an outstanding Catholic primary school offering the children a rich faith experience in line with their mission statement. The school is well led by a dedicated headteacher, a strong senior leadership team and committed governing body who effectively co-lead this school. The senior leadership team creates an ethos which is inclusive, welcoming, prayerful and with high expectations. There is a strong partnership with the parish and the work undertaken by the Parish Forum to enrich the spiritual life of the school is inspirational. Lessons are stimulating and pupils make outstanding progress in Religious Education. Teachers ask challenging questions that promote deep thinking and encourage pupils to ask questions of their peers. Monitoring and assessment of the Religious Education curriculum has ensured that there has been significant development since the last inspection. The celebration of Mass, prayer services and assemblies are well prepared and give pupils many opportunities to develop and enrich their prayer life. Parents feel welcome and at ease in school and are able to talk to staff about their child's progress. The Spiritual Mentor, working alongside the RE coordinator, has enhanced the spiritual life of the school and has given tremendous support to staff, pupils and parents.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The quality of religious education and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding.
- Partnership with the parish is outstanding; particularly the active Parish Forum and the Sacramental Programme.
- Enthusiastic leadership from a dedicated Religious Education Co-ordinator has led to important improvements in Religious Education and the spiritual life of the school.
- The Catholic life, relationships, behaviour and care for all within the school is outstanding.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The dedicated Headteacher is energised by the task of leading this school and under her leadership outcomes for children are outstanding. There is a strong sense of ownership and vision across the community, governors, staff team and pupils and their families who are unified and guided by a living Mission Statement. The governors are supportive, proactive and committed to the aims of the school. They have been instrumental in shaping the vision of the school especially in the implementation of the 5W's, the diocesan scheme for development and delivery of Religious Education. The Chair of Governors works closely with the headteacher to ensure all the governors are aware of current strengths and areas for development. The Vice Chair has developed in depth knowledge of pupil achievement data which he has shared with others on the Governing Body to strengthen their capacity as leaders of the school. Strong leadership from the Religious Education coordinator has ensured that there has been significant improvement since the last inspection. Monitoring and self-evaluation is rigorous and includes regular classroom observations. Appraisal is thorough and effective and performance management objectives in Religious Education are a regular feature. The Parish Priest is fully involved in the religious life of the school and visits regularly going into the classrooms and talking to the children. Parents were extremely complimentary regarding the

welcome they receive at St Monica's church and the children's liturgy. The sacramental programme is delivered by catechist from the parish and parents are encouraged to be actively involved and they are supported on their journey through spiritual guidance / catechist meetings for parents. A number of staff are members of the Parish Forum. Leadership skills for the children are developed through the varied organisations within the school including the school council. Through the Catholic Leadership Programme, the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher have fostered links with other Catholic schools in the Diocese.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS OUTSTANDING

The school has creatively used the RE scheme, The Way, The Truth and The Life to inspire and engage pupils in some difficult concepts of faith. Teaching and learning across the school was found to be outstanding. Pupil background knowledge was found to be outstanding and where the Kagan approach is used the higher order thinking and questioning is resulting in exceptional learning. Children were actively encouraged to reflect before speaking and pupil questioning is a strong feature in lessons. Creative, interactive teaching strategies were employed across all lessons. Pupils demonstrated a very good knowledge of scripture and bibles were available in all classrooms for reference and reading for pleasure. Lessons moved forward quickly and pupils clearly achieved the learning objective. Individual pupil targets for RE are shared with pupils and put inside their exercise books for reference. Key vocabulary was also displayed in books. Standards and expectations in Religious Education are at least as good as those expected in literacy and teachers are always looking for ways to challenge high achieving pupils as well as supporting those with additional needs. Marking is having a positive impact on learning and pupils are responding to the teacher's comments, but this would be further improved through a more rigorous insistence that best practice was adopted by all teachers. Pupils Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education was found to be outstanding and throughout all aspects of the school. The Religious Education budget is set according to the needs of the curriculum and the Catholic life of the school and is adjusted on a yearly basis in line with other core subjects. The school priorities Religious Education on their professional development programme. Governors have joined staff at the Marist Centre for INSET. All classes receive a minimum of 10% RE curriculum time.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

St Monica's is an extremely welcoming community where everyone is made to feel valued and at ease. The pupils clearly understood the importance of welcoming others into their community. They demonstrated their understanding in a variety of contexts and they are living examples of the school mission statement. The children are happy and secure within the school. The pupils' sense of ownership and responsibility for what happens in their school was outstanding. The School Council and 'House' system promote a sense of responsibility and pride. The Head boy and girl and their deputies play an important role in welcoming others into the school community. The school actively seeks to engage with and support members of the school community. Parents were extremely appreciative of all the things the school does to make them feel welcome and informed. In recent times, communication with parents has improved tremendously. Parents are particularly appreciative of the newsletter, website information and the 'Wednesday Word'. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in school life. New families and pupils are welcomed into the school community through a variety of activities to ensure a smooth induction including a welcome pack, welcome mass and meeting with parents. All members of staff demonstrate a keen sense of community affiliation and the quality of relationships exemplifies respect for all members of the school community. Morale is high and the staff work effectively as a team.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

Parents spoke highly of the pastoral support their child receives in school. Staff and children demonstrate respect and care for each other and for the school uniform of which they are justifiably proud. Teachers are approachable and parents feel able to talk with them about issues that concern them; concerns are dealt

with effectively. The school uses Caritas social work service to support vulnerable families. Provision for safe-guarding and keeping children safe is outstanding. The quality of transition is such that all children quickly feel part of the school community. Excellent attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support. The provision for SRE is through the school's own programme, although they are currently reviewing their policy and provision. Behaviour and movement of pupils around the building is outstanding. Those children needing extra support with behaviour, welfare and learning are very well supported. All staff follow procedures set out in the schools behaviour policy and there are a various reward schemes in operation. The school promotes high attendance and punctuality. Pupils within the school clearly have a voice and are listened to through School Council and other initiatives. They make decisions about ways in which the children can raise money for the school's chosen charities. Pupils are confident that if they have any problems they can speak to a member of staff and that any problems will be dealt with sympathetically.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORSHIP COMMUNITY IS GOOD

The spiritual life of the children is held in the high regard with children afforded opportunities every day to be involved in collective worship. All classes pray together in the morning, at lunchtime and at the end of the day. There are two Masses each term, at the start and the end, to which families and parishioners are invited. Whole school assemblies reflect on personal faith, moral issues, festivals, special occasions and other religions and cultures. During whole school assembly, the Headteacher encouraged the children to carry the 'thought of the day' with them; to be the light of Christ in school. The story of Jesus' presentation in the temple was accompanied by appropriate pictures on the whiteboard and the hymns sung were uplifting and interactive. 'Thought of the Week' is well established in school and is encouraging all to reflect, act and promote Christian values. Staff are well trained through appropriate INSET and hands on experience modelled by their peers to demonstrate good practice. The pupils have developed a good knowledge of traditional prayers, including the Rosary. However, greater opportunity for silent reflective and meditative prayer will enable pupils to pray to God using their own words or thoughts. A recently developed 'quiet room' and the future prayer garden will promote a more spontaneous approach to prayer. A school prayer book is on the website for parents and pupils to access. The collect worship in the classroom was reflective, child-centred and spiritually up-lifting. The organisation and implementation of this activity was excellent and resulted in a deeply spiritual experience for all those present. Increasing pupil involvement even further with opportunities for reflective and meditative prayer will move good practice to outstanding. Visualisation could also be used with older pupils. Throughout the school there was evidence of high quality resources in all areas. Prayer tables in classrooms, display materials and artefacts demonstrate creativity and relevance to the children.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

There were frequent references to the mission statement in assembly and lessons. Staff and pupils are confident and secure in their witness to Christ, the gospels and the teaching of the church. The school encourages and supports its pupils to develop a relationship with God. It fosters a spirit of awe and wonder through religious education and the broader curriculum. Relationships are excellent between all members of the community and staff demonstrate positive behaviour. A strong sense of belonging to the school community exists based on the teachings of Jesus. Pupils clearly demonstrate witness to justice, compassion, reconciliation, love and forgiveness from the displays around school and the work in their books. The Spiritual Mentor has an important role to play in fostering a partnership with parents and the parish. Close links with the parish are enhanced with the regular visits of the Parish Priest and the work of the catechists for the sacramental programme. Holy Week is the highlight of the school year with all members of the school community bearing witness and taking part in collective and reflective prayer sessions. Observations showed that children treated each other with respect, care, patience, concern and with dignity and there is an emphasis on creating a pleasant working environment for everyone in school. The pupils are keen supporters of local and international charities. It is clear that the school stands as a witness to Christ's love, forgiveness and compassion when challenged. The support for families in difficulty or any trouble is exceptional.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- The introduction of pupil chaplains in order to further develop pupil leadership in prayer and worship.
- Improve reflective and meditative prayer life within the school.

Thursday 5th February 2014

Dear Pupils

Thank you so much for the wonderful welcome you gave me when we came to visit you. I really enjoyed learning about all the wonderful things you do at St Monica's. You and your teachers are working so hard to always do your very best and as a result your school is outstanding.

I enjoyed being part of your lessons and was sorry not to see everyone. Your work is of a very high standard and I could clearly see that you have outstanding knowledge of bible stories, Catholic faith and the life of Saints. Thank you for showing me so much of what you have been doing. I was very impressed with the standard of work in your RE books and your work on display.

It was wonderful to see how you participated in Collective Worship, how well you read the prayers and your wonderful singing. Your behaviour was exemplary and your prayers were uplifting. I hope you use the new quiet room to prayer and relax.

You are obviously proud of your school and the work you do is outstanding. Father Bernard is extremely proud of what you have achieved and he is so pleased to see you at St Monica's Church. He is impressed by the number of families who attend mass and special events in Church, well done.

Your teachers are keen to help you develop the Catholic life of your school even further and to do this they are going to invite you to consider how you can develop Chaplaincy in your school through training pupil Chaplains. They are also going to increase opportunities for silent prayer where you talk to God using your own words or thoughts.

God bless you all and have a really happy term.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Susan Gedzielewski and Mr Brendan Hennessy
(Section 48 Inspectors)

Summary Report to Parents

On 6th February 2014 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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