

SALFORD DIOCESE
INSPECTION REPORT

ST. ALPHONSUS
ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Hamilton Street Old Trafford Manchester M16 7PT



Inspection date May 2009

Reporting Inspector Mrs. Pamela Parden

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

Type of School	Catholic Primary
URN	106360
Age range of pupils	3-11
Number on roll	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of Governors	Mrs. Michelle O'Sullivan
Headteacher	Mrs. Tina Birds
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Miss Sarah Regan
Date of previous inspection	June 2006

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

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Alphonsus is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school serving the parish of St. Alphonsus whose church is about half a mile away. This inclusive school is situated in the Clifton ward in Trafford. There is considerable social and economic deprivation in the area with high levels of unemployment. The school deals with related issues on a daily basis. The majority of families live in rented properties. A number of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds and approximately half are of black Caribbean heritage. Learners' ages range from 3 to 11 years. The admission number is 28 and there are 154 pupils on roll including the full time Nursery. 106 of the learners (68.3%) are baptised Catholics. There is a significant number of children from different faiths and cultures. 50% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. 52 children have been identified as having special educational needs and 1 has a statutory statement of special educational need. 7 of the full time and 2 of the part time teachers (75%) are Catholics. 4 hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or equivalent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Alphonsus is a good Catholic school with many outstanding features. The management and leadership ensure that it provides a very welcoming, safe, secure and stable environment. The children know that they are respected, cared for and loved and can grow and learn with confidence. The school very successfully fulfils its mission providing a Catholic education that embraces pupils and staff of diverse cultures and faiths with no barriers existing. All evidence supports the achievement of their motto "Nothing is impossible to a willing heart". The school provides a very clean, stimulating and orderly environment in which the talents of all are nurtured and celebrated. All staff are dedicated and committed and as a whole team promote community cohesion effectively. All work extremely hard to help the school to grow and develop. Everyone is valued equally. Individuals are nurtured on their faith journey and encouraged to achieve their full potential and to know the values of love, respect and reconciliation. The strong Catholic ethos pervades all aspects of school life and ensures very good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The headteacher is well supported by the governors, the parish priest and staff. She displays dedication and exemplary leadership. All relationships in school are very positive and this ensures that St. Alphonsus is a very happy school. Teachers willingly and enthusiastically undertake a range of responsibilities which contributes to their own professional development.

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has fully addressed the two key issues from last Section 48 inspection in June 2006. Learners are involved in the planning and delivery of whole school Masses celebrated in church. They use power point presentations, readings, dance and varied resources to enhance the quality of whole school collective worship. Members of the governing body have developed their roles and there is a link governor for each class. They work well in their committees and they now are more involved in the life and development of the school.

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is very good. The head teacher has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and a very clear vision for future needs and priorities. She is encouraged by the governing body and very well supported by the staff. Monitoring, assessment and recording arrangements are in place and serve as a guide in drawing up the School Improvement Plan. The diverse nature and ability range of the pupil intake are recognised. Experience and understanding result in continuous review and necessary action to address any challenges. Advice from the Salford Diocese and other external agencies is well used. Provision for staff development and in-service training is good. The school's capacity to improve is very good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement development plans already agreed.

THE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The Catholic faith is central to the life and ethos of the school and is reflected in the Mission Statement drawn up by governors, staff and learners. It includes the aim, "to provide an environment which reflects our Christian gospels and the teachings of the Catholic Church". Governors are well informed and provide challenge and support, working effectively in committees and individually. One is linked to each class. The chair of governors is the link governor for Religious Education. She communicates regularly with the headteacher, monitors progress and keeps the governing body informed. The parish priest is a regular visitor and shares in the school's life. The high quality of the headteacher's leadership, with very good support from senior staff and good staff teamwork, ensures the continuous development of the Catholic life of the school. Priority is given to appointing Catholic teachers or those committed to the school's mission. Staff attend relevant meetings and training to lead the school forward. Governors are involved in action planning and review. This results from the school's excellent procedures for self-evaluation, monitoring and the setting of priorities. Relationships throughout the school are outstanding. Learners are encouraged to exercise responsibilities as school counsellors or monitors. Home, school and parish links are good. There is much support for the parish based Sacramental Programme. Links with the cluster Catholic schools are very successful especially in their work towards community cohesion.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The quality of collective worship is outstanding. A comprehensive policy is in place with an aim, "to give due attention to prayer and worship and to seek opportunities for good experiences where children can grow and develop in their Faith". Prayer, worship and liturgical celebrations are central to the school's tradition and an integral part of its life. Varied forms of worship are used daily including private, meditative, individual and group prayer in both formal and informal settings. The Religious Education co-ordinator organises the assembly rota and keeps records. The assemblies themselves are well planned and include learners' involvement, the use of artifacts, visual images, prayer and singing. The headteacher leads Monday's whole school assembly based on an appropriate liturgy or a relevant theme. The excellent assembly observed during inspection focused on achievements and goals with the final agreed goal to be like Jesus. Tuesday's assemblies are led by classes in turn with learners involved in planning and presentation. Parents are keen to share these occasions. Hymn practice is a much enjoyed and whole school celebration of a high standard. Classes share prayer and worship experiences on other days. These follow monthly themes and include individual needs and intentions. The school strives for flexibility and creativity in a peaceful, prayerful environment in which all can develop their personal relationships with God. Prayer was observed to be sincere, reverent and respectful. Each class has a focal point related to an appropriate liturgical theme. Pupils help to prepare readings and prayers for school and parish Masses and liturgies in liaison with the parish priest. The example set by governors and staff and their obvious faith encourages respect in pupils and supports their spiritual and moral development.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good with some outstanding features. The Nursery and Foundation Years provide a stimulating environment and a happy start to school life and learning. Many pupils arrive with a very low baseline of faith experiences and knowledge. The assessment and recording of individual learner's progress enable appropriate targets to be set and the school's monitoring and evaluation system confirms that many exceed the expected levels of attainment by the end of each key stage. Scrutiny shows the provision for all the diverse abilities results in the best possible outcomes. During the inspection learners were seen to enjoy their lessons. They were co-operative and responsive especially where appropriate and challenging tasks were set to meet their needs. This was evident in Year 1 when the use of Gospel readings, pictures, smart board images and video clips helped the children to understand how the apostles felt when Jesus appeared to them in the upper room. Through the religious curriculum and prayer and worship all learners develop their knowledge and understanding of Catholic beliefs, values and way of life and are able to relate these to their own lives. They have good knowledge of the Bible. Learners know about and respect other faiths and cultures and many experiences are created to promote harmony within the school. Learners' confidently share thoughts and ideas using research skills and discussion. The very good behaviour is achieved through respect, sharing, reconciliation and a belief in the value of each individual. Staff have high expectations and learners' efforts are recognised and rewarded at Friday's assembly. Through prayer, good works and fund-raising they show care for those in need both in school and beyond.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good overall with some outstanding features. All teachers have a secure understanding of *REvision 2000* and are introducing *Moving the Vision On*. Thorough planning includes clearly stated aims, objectives and activities linked to all ability levels. Assessment activities, moderation and detailed records of individual pupils' attainment inform future planning to support progress. Marking is positive and constructive. Very good use of teaching assistants helps to ensure good support for learners of differing languages, cultures and abilities. Classroom management and organisation is very good. The use of quality resources, visual aids and challenging tasks helps to deepen learners' knowledge and understanding. This was very evident in Year 4 when the teacher dressed and acted as "Mrs. Noah" questioning her husband's building of a wooden house. She then laid a felt arc out on the floor and children placed pairs of animals on it. They readily discussed the Bible, Mr. and Mrs. Noah's feelings and showed the ability to empathize with the feelings of others. Learners enjoy their lessons, are co-operative and attentive and share each other's views. Interactive white boards, information communication technology and visual aids are well used. Staff work hard to share their own faith with the whole school community. Parents are proud of their school and happy with their children's achievements in religious education. They receive regular newsletters and are encouraged to attend assemblies and liturgical celebrations and so share in the life of the school and parish.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is good and in many areas is outstanding. The school fully observes national and diocesan requirements in relation to curriculum content and time allocation. All lessons are based on the diocesan *REvision 2000* guidelines and *Moving the Vision On*. Despite learners' varied backgrounds the school strives to ensure that, "God is the focus for everything we try to do" and that "all members of the school community have a common goal, a common purpose, a common faith". The comprehensive written Religious Education policy and aims are fundamental to this and ensure good spiritual, moral and social development for all learners. The assessment process tracks each child's progress and attainment. Planning is appropriately linked to results to ensure that individual needs are met and that progress is maintained. A good range of quality resources, reviewed annually, is catalogued, stored centrally and in classrooms and well used to enhance learners' experiences and understanding. The use of audio and visual aids, interactive white boards and information communication technology further supports the curriculum as does a range of extra-curricular activities. The written policy for community cohesion reflects the school's Mission and work in this area is further promoted by outside visits and the visitors. As part of the Religious Education curriculum work on other faiths and cultures is undertaken throughout the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are outstanding. The headteacher is committed to its importance as central to the school's whole life and ethos. The recently appointed Religious Education co-ordinator is working closely with the head teacher refining and developing the excellent work that was already in place. She is dedicated, enthusiastic and zealously manages the subject ensuring it retains a very high profile in all school life and planning. She scrutinises teachers' planning and pupils' work to measure progress and evaluate resource and development needs. She leads the moderation of learners' assessment tasks and keeps records of outcomes. With the headteacher she provides help and support for staff, attends diocesan courses and cluster meetings and keeps colleagues updated on relevant issues. The headteacher's monitoring role is continuous including termly lesson observations. Through her involvement in Religious Education and prayer and worship she provides constructive help and encouragement for staff. This leads to good teamwork, good classroom management and high standards. All work is supported by the active involvement of the parish priest and the link governor for Religious Education who are concerned, as all governors are, to ensure that existing high standards are maintained.