



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST COLUMBA'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

HUYTON

Inspection Date Tuesday 15 March 2011

Inspectors Mrs. Denise Hegarty Mr. Andy Cocker

Unique Reference Number: 104480

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School Catholic Primary

Age range of pupils 3 – 11

Number on roll 243

Chair of Governors Mrs. M. Russell

Head teacher Mr. Ronan Dunne

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Date of last inspection 20 November 2008

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about the school

St Columba's school is an average sized Catholic Primary School situated in Huyton, in the Knowsley district of the Archdiocese serving the parish of St. Columba's. There are 243 children on roll of whom 150 are baptised Catholic and 85 pupils are not baptised. Eight children come from other Christian denominations. There are no children from other faith or religious traditions. There are 12 teachers at the school of whom 11 teach Religious Education and 10 are Catholic. Nine teachers have a suitable qualification in Religious Education and 2 further teachers are currently undertaking the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. Both the Headteacher and the Religious Education co-ordinator have been in post since the last inspection. There has recently been considerable remodelling and refurbishment work within the school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

Inspection Judgements

**Overall effectiveness:
how effective the school is in providing Catholic Education**

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main Findings:-

St. Columba's is an outstanding Catholic Primary School. The clear vision for Catholic Education is driven by the headteacher and embraced by the whole school community. This is manifest in the school's Mission Statement and permeates every aspect of school life. Achievement and attainment in Religious Education are outstanding. Pupils make excellent progress from a low starting point. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school and are very positive and enthusiastic about their learning. They behave in an outstanding manner and, in line with their Mission Statement, are caring, supportive and considerate of their peers. They strive to 'live in the light'. Pupils benefit from and contribute to a varied range of opportunities provided by the school to develop its Catholic character. They are becoming more independent in leading prayer and worship and engage wholeheartedly in the many opportunities that are given to them to participate in the prayer and liturgical life of the school. Their spiritual and moral development is exceptional.

Relationships within the school are excellent and there is a clear focus on nurturing, caring, guiding and supporting each individual child and their family. This is a school where every child really matters and all are treated with the utmost dignity and respect. A rich Religious Education curriculum, enhanced by excellent resources, promotes purposeful learning and contributes to the school's outstanding provision. Teaching and learning in Religious Education throughout the school is outstanding overall. The quality of the prayer life of the school is also thoroughly outstanding throughout.

The school is successful in addressing the areas it has identified for improvement. Since the last inspection it has securely maintained and built on its previously outstanding performance. Self evaluation is rigorous and accurate. The leadership team is deeply motivated and consistently communicates its high expectations to staff in order to secure improvement and growth. Teachers are provided with regular in-service opportunities to support their ongoing development. They are supported and affirmed. Monitoring and evaluation systems are being used effectively to improve outcomes. Any underperformance is challenged. The subject leader undertakes her role in an outstanding manner and approaches her work with zeal. Governors are enthusiastic, supportive and proactive in their roles.

Leaders and managers work extremely well together and ensure that the school's shared mission, vision and aims are driven forward. This has resulted in sustained and continuing improvement to outcomes for pupils since the last inspection. This is a school which knows itself very well, identifies priorities, sets targets, secures improvement and thrives on challenge in all aspects of its work and mission. Given the dedication, loyalty and commitment shown by the

headteacher, the subject leader and all members of the school community alongside rigorous self-evaluation, there is an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Continue to implement the targets set out in the school's Self-Evaluation Document. That includes:
 - continuing to embed assessment procedures and systems to track pupil progress;
 - increasing the contribution made by children in the planning and leadership of Collective Worship;
 - the induction of the new R.E. link governor and the development of her role in self-evaluation processes.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Pupils' achievements and attainment in Religious Education are outstanding. As they enter school, many children have a limited knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith so they make truly outstanding progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Analyses of assessments undertaken provide evidence of pupils generally attaining appropriate or higher levels for their age and stage of development in each key stage. There is no difference in performance between pupils of different gender. Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are also outstanding and this is testament to the hard work and leadership of the SENCO, who works closely with all staff and many families. Pupils are becoming increasingly more religiously literate as they assimilate the key words from the topic, retell stories from Scripture and relate their own life experiences to the Christian understanding of the topics. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developing appropriate to their age and capacity and some exceed expectations. They are developing the skills that enable them to think spiritually, ethically and theologically and are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Any underachievement is identified and challenged. Pupils are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively. They thoroughly enjoy their Religious Education lessons, are highly motivated to learn and have positive attitudes towards their work. This is evident in the enthusiasm and excitement shown and in their outstanding behaviour in lessons. They work well together showing each other kindness, encouragement and co-operation. Children are actively involved in developing and evaluating the Catholic character of the school in a variety of different ways. Pupils have a real sense of belonging to the school community and value and respect other members. As one child said at interview, 'Everyone in this school treats each other the same, no matter what.' They are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility in the school and wider community e.g. in their roles as school councillors and their visits to a local care home. Year 5 pupils were taken bowling with local pensioners. Pupils benefit from participation in away days and retreat activities. They have an excellent sense of right and wrong, follow their Mission Statement and apply the values found therein in their personal relationships. They are considerate and caring of others both in school and the wider community and take an increasing responsibility for their own actions. They praise and acknowledge the contribution of others and show a readiness to embrace and celebrate their lived experiences.

Pupils respond to, and participate outstandingly in Collective Worship. They are reverent, prayerful and show great respect. Their knowledge of prayer and liturgy is increasing and they are very familiar with a variety of prayer styles. Pupils' liturgical formation is developing very well. They have acquired a range of skills which enable them to prepare and lead celebrations as appropriate to their age and stage of development. The children sing joyfully, reflect purposefully and join in community prayers confidently. They show reverence for and an appreciation of the Word of God in the scriptures.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
How well pupils achieve in Religious Education	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of pupils' learning and their progress in Religious Education 	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

Teaching across the school is consistently very effective in ensuring that pupils are interested, engaged and make outstanding progress. Teachers take into account pupils' prior learning so that the work consolidates, builds on and extends knowledge and understanding. Outstanding in-service provision enables staff to have an up to date knowledge and understanding of current developments. The Catholic Teachers Certificate in Religious Studies is promoted and new staff members are supported and encouraged to enrol. Every current member of staff either has the qualification, or is currently enrolled on the course. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work both independently and collaboratively. Planning is monitored regularly by the co-ordinator and general findings are fed back to staff. Whilst planning is thorough and comprehensive, more attention should be given to using the 'driver words' from the Levels of Attainment to sharpen and focus it at the most appropriate level for the children. Work is often differentiated to enable children to succeed at their task. Effort and achievement are recognised, rewarded and celebrated. Outstanding use is made of time and of resources e.g. through the use of their interactive whiteboards to stimulate and engage the children and in the excellent deployment of additional adults to support teaching and learning. A variety of strategies and exciting and captivating tasks are used to inspire and motivate pupils e.g. through affirmation, role play, books and movies. Behaviour is well managed across the school with very effective and consistent use of praise and rewards. Teachers and additional adults are enthusiastic and energetic in their delivery of the subject and are excellent role models for the children to emulate. The care, guidance and support they give the children is exceptional and exemplary. They treat each and every child with dignity and respect. The Learning Mentor provides very effective support and guidance especially for the vulnerable and needy. The school learning environment is positive and vibrant. Great care is taken to provide excellent facilities and resources for pupils of all ages and abilities. Strategic plans are in place for these to improve further still.

The assessment of pupils' work in Religious Education is good. The school has good assessment strategies which provide accurate and detailed information on the achievement of all the pupils. Teachers are able to identify how well pupils are achieving and tackle underachievement. Some teachers enable pupils to evaluate and assess their own work. Formal assessment tasks are undertaken in line with Archdiocesan guidance. Assessment information is collated by the subject leader and shared with the leadership team, staff and governors. Achievement and effort are celebrated. Pupils are regularly affirmed. To enable standards to rise consistently, the findings from assessments should be used more effectively to inform planning. Annual reports inform parents what their children have undertaken in the subject but could concentrate more on indicating progress and achievement in Religious Education.

The curriculum is outstanding in meeting pupils' needs. All staff and leaders see Religious Education as the core subject and the very heart of the curriculum. The school using the *Here I Am* programme recommended by the Archdiocese meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. A whole school approach is used and appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in the different year groups. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets National and Archdiocesan requirements. Of the total curriculum time at least 10% is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. Planning ensures full coverage of the Religious Education programme. Termly Religious Education letters are provided for parents and carers and these provide information about what is being taught in Religious Education, and how they can support their children's learning. Parents' views and opinions are regularly sought and valued. The headteacher and members of staff meet informally with parents each day to keep them informed as to what is happening in the life of the school. Links between home and school are forged over the course of each topic with homework tasks and through effective use of the *Wednesday Word*. The school implements new curriculum developments as necessary, and adapts its curriculum appropriately to meet the varying needs of the pupils. Many cross curricular links are made. The Religious Education curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development. This is enriched by *SeaI* activities and by visits and visitors to the school e.g. children visited the local mosque and received visits from a member of the Jewish faith. A weekly assembly, to which the whole school community is invited, takes place to reward good work and behaviour and to reiterate the values from the Gospel and especially those found in the school's Mission Statement. Children are offered many opportunities to benefit from and contribute to the Catholic life of the school, all of which have an outstanding impact on their spiritual, moral and social development.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding. Teachers (and pupils) plan well and the subject leader ensures effective monitoring takes place. Provision for Collective Worship has a high profile in the school. First-rate resources, including the use of ICT, are provided to enhance worship and are kept up to date. An excellent policy and guidelines are in place. Collective Worship reflects the Catholic character of the school and takes into account the backgrounds of the pupils. Staff members use their skills well to engage the children and provide joyful celebrations. Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils. Children are enabled to pray formally and informally. Time to reflect on learning and to thank God is often part

of the plenary session in lessons. The school provides opportunities for children to develop their skills in planning and leading Collective Worship in an age appropriate way. Parents and carers are often invited to join in celebrations.

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	1
The effectiveness of assessment in Religious Education	2
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	1

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the schools

Leaders and managers are outstanding in promoting and developing the Catholic life of the school and show an excellent understanding of and commitment to, the Mission of the Church. This is reflected in the school's very distinct Catholic ethos and in its own Mission Statement - in the way the community take Jesus as their inspiration and example. All those who form part of the school community were involved in the development and review of their Mission Statement. It directs and guides every aspect of school life. Children are regularly rewarded for showing that they live it out. Opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in Catholic life and Mission of the school e.g. in outreach, charity work and in raising awareness of those in need.

There is deep commitment and drive for improvement demonstrated by the headteacher, subject co-ordinator and leadership team. Ongoing self evaluation ensures that continuous improvements are made in all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. The Self Evaluation Document provides evidence of the schools monitoring, searching analysis and self challenge. It is rigorous, comprehensive and accurate. This analysis provides a basis to celebrate the school's strengths and outlines the areas for development. Timescales and clear lines of accountability are included thus ensuring the school's priorities are clear. There is good induction for new teachers and continuing professional development for all staff to enable them to understand the Church's Mission in Education, how to play their unique part in it and how to deliver the *Here I Am* programme effectively. All staff members are actively encouraged to keep their knowledge and understanding of the subject up to date through courses and in-service training provided by the co-ordinator, the headteacher and the Archdiocese. A range of opportunities for spiritual development are provided for all staff which includes annual retreats and regular collective worship. These enable the adults in school, in turn, to provide good opportunities for the children to develop their own spirituality in a variety of ways.

Leaders and managers use monitoring data well to evaluate the school's performance, celebrate, and plan future improvements. There is a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation programme undertaken for teaching and learning, planning, children's work and assessments. The findings contribute to the Self Evaluation Document and this is monitored carefully throughout the year. The subject leader fulfils her role in an outstanding manner

with enthusiasm and great commitment. Archdiocesan briefings and training sessions are well attended. New initiatives are introduced when appropriate, best practice shared and support given to colleagues as required. Reports are regularly produced and delivered to the Governing Body to keep them fully informed. Excellent documentation guides and directs all staff in their delivery of the subject. This is updated as necessary.

Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They have effectively helped to shape the direction of the school through, for example, ensuring there is an effective budget. Detailed reports from the subject leader and the Religious Education nominated governor ensure that the all governors have an increasing knowledge and understanding of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school. The school tracks pupil achievement in Religious Education, and governors have the data to analyse the school's performance in the subject and to monitor what needs to be done to further raise standards.

Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all. There are positive relationships at every level leading to a welcoming, happy, caring learning environment for staff and pupils. Leaders and managers facilitate pupils' involvement in service to the immediate neighbourhood served by the school and to the wider community. Dialogue and collaboration is encouraged with people who hold different beliefs and values as far as possible. The use of the Religious Education Programme, *Here I Am*, provides outstanding support to community cohesion. Children have had opportunity to explore the beliefs and values of Judaism and Islam. This has been further enhanced by a visitor of the Jewish faith into school and by visits to a Mosque. The school has successfully established links with a Jewish school in Liverpool, and with another where a large majority of pupils are of African or Asian heritage. These experiences have helped the children understand how others make sense of the world in which we live and to promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently.

The school has good links with the parish. Children visit the parish church and attend Mass there occasionally. At Sunday Mass, the children's liturgy is lead by catechists from the school community. The *Wednesday Word* is provided by the parish and distributed though the school for the families to share at home. The school participated wholeheartedly in the Papal Visit. Some of the staff and children went down to be part of the Big Assembly and the rest of the community followed the visit avidly back in school by watching the television coverage. There were many experiences and celebrations that followed up the visit. Frequent opportunities are taken to visit the Cathedral for services and worship. Links with the local community are outstanding and the school works well with many local agencies including the fire and police departments to raise awareness of the work they do.

The pupils are developing an understanding of the common good and an awareness of global responsibilities. The school community shows a concern for the well-being of those less fortunate than themselves both by becoming better informed and by raising funds and resources for local, national and global charities e.g. in their donations to the Good Shepherd fund for Nugent Care and CAFOD.

The school offers a breakfast club and an after school club. Parents are involved in their children's learning in a variety of ways. A Parent Mentor is deployed to support, inform and encourage parents and carers. Regular newsletters provide information about what their children are learning in Religious Education and how parents and carers can help them do so. They appreciate and value all the school does to provide such a distinct Catholic education for their children.

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are addressed decisively and responsibilities met	2
How effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion	1