



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

School: **ST.CLARE ,R.C. PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
Address: **VICTORIA AVENUE ,Higher Blackley, Manchester M9 0RR**  
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URN: **105554**

Headteacher: Mr. Vincent Jones  
Chair of Governors: Mr. John Stroger

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Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Salford  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Date of inspection: JULY 12<sup>th</sup>. and 13<sup>th</sup> 2011  
Date of previous inspection: JUNE 2008  
Reporting Inspector: Mrs Mary McGrail

## **Information about the school**

St. Clare's R.C. Primary school serves the parish of St. Clare's, Higher Blackley, Manchester. The school adjoins the parish church. The majority of the pupils live in the parish. Both church and school are situated in an area of social and economic disadvantage north of the city of Manchester. The majority of pupils live in council and rented housing properties. The indicative admission number is 60. There are currently 408 pupils on roll, plus a 45 place Nursery. 323 (79%) of the pupils are baptised Catholics. An increasing number of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. 34% are eligible for free school meals and 45 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs. 17 of the 20 teachers (85%) are Catholics.

The headteacher and deputy head were in post at the time of the last inspection. There have been a number of staff changes. Several teachers have moved to other schools, a teacher is on maternity leave. One teacher is on a temporary contract, one is from a supply agency. A newly qualified teacher was appointed in September 2010 and 3 permanent appointments have been made for September 2011.

The school has been in the process of being refurbished throughout this school year. A new administration block has been built, toilets for pupils and staff have been upgraded, a new classroom has been provided and by September 2011 a computer suite will have been established as part of the ongoing improvement to improve pupils learning environment.

## **Overall Effectiveness**

### **Grade 2**

St. Clare's is a good Catholic school. It is effective in offering its pupils a traditional Catholic education in a safe, secure and supportive environment. It is a happy, welcoming school where difference and diversity are welcomed and celebrated. Pupils enjoy coming to school and work hard to meet the expectations of the teachers. They are friendly and polite to everyone and their behaviour at all times is very good. Good, positive relationships are evident throughout the whole school community and respect for everyone, as a child of God, is paramount in the daily life of the school. The Mission Statement's aims are certainly realised every day "...in a loving place where everyone can grow, achieve and develop with the help of God and the community." Throughout the school year learners, parents, staff and parishioners are given opportunities to develop their relationship with God through Masses, assemblies and liturgies. This being possible through the commitment of the parish priest and his input into the Collective Worship and prayer life of the school. He is a regular and welcome visitor to the school. The governing body are becoming more pro active in their support for the head teacher and senior management team as with the staff, they share a clear vision for the future development of St Clare's school.

## **Capacity for sustained improvement**

### **Grade 2**

The school's self evaluation is honest, generally accurate and realistic. The senior management team are aware of those areas that are still in need of development,

namely assessment and a more rigorous and consistent approach to monitoring and evaluating the overall provision . The headteacher ,and his deputy, as Religious Education co-ordinator ,have the expertise and determination ,with the support of the staff and governing body ,to bring about the realisation of their vision for the future development of St Clare's school.

### **What the school needs to do to improve further**

1. \*Establish a consistent and systematic programme for the monitoring and evaluation of curriculum Religious Education to ensure all year groups receive their full curriculum entitlement particularly in Year 3.
2. Establish a rigorous and consistent approach to the planning and delivery of curriculum Religious Education to ensure accurate assessments become a component part of teaching and learning strategies thus raising standards.
3. \*Ensure class collective worship is a regular and planned feature of the prayer life of the pupils in all classes.

## **PUPILS**

### **How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups**

**Grade 2**

Many pupils enter the Foundation Stage with attainment well below national expectations particularly in language and communication skills .Generally they make good progress reflecting the quality of the teaching. By the end of the Reception class they are able to write their own name and speak with confidence about their work using good religious vocabulary. This good progress is maintained in Key Stage One. The Year One pupils are able to write simple prayers and retell bible stories using their own words .These are written in sentences in a legible format.

They are able to talk about what can be seen in church and have an appropriate knowledge of bible stories. The Year Two pupils have an impressive knowledge of St. Paul and his life. By the end of the key stage they produce well constructed sentences when retelling stories they have heard. In discussions they use good religious vocabulary. They demonstrate a genuine interest in their Religious Education lessons.

In Key Stage Two ,overall, progress is good and by the end of the Key Stage the factual knowledge of their faith ,shown by the pupils, is good. However the rate of progress is inconsistent .In Year 3 the progress is barely satisfactory. Very little work is recorded and the oral knowledge of the pupils ,when explaining why this year is special for them, was less than impressive. In one Year 3 class only 4 pieces of written work were recorded between the beginning of March and June 2011.

Good progress continues in the upper Key Stage Two classes with very good examples of extended pieces of writing on religious topics in most classes. In discussions with the pupils, many show a mature attitude to their lives as Catholic Christians and have a very good knowledge of other faiths and religions . They are aware of the similarities and differences between faiths whilst recognising respect for all people is crucial.

Pupils who need extra help are supported by teaching assistants or tasks are specially planned to meet their needs and abilities.

In all lessons observed pupils enjoyed their work and showed a keen interest in being involved in the lessons. They worked well in pairs, small groups and as members of a larger class group. When given a task to complete they work quietly until the task is completed.

If the progress in Key Stage Two was more consistent standards would be higher. The older pupils accept responsibility and are happy to act as house captains and representatives on the school council. The Year 6 are prayer partners for the Year 3 children in the Sacramental programme.

The older pupils act as readers and altar servers when whole school masses are held in church. Pupils enjoy preparing and presenting occasional assemblies for their parents. Praise assemblies for each key stage are held weekly. They are very happy to applaud others success and special efforts .Staff usually lead the assemblies

.The Foundation Stage/Key Stage One praise assembly observed during the inspection was appropriate for the age of the pupils, involved the Year 2 pupils with the reading of their own bidding prayers and the “action “hymns were sang with both melody and enthusiasm. A greater input from the pupils on a regular basis would ensure a developing confidence in planning and delivering collective worship.

Currently there is little evidence that class collective worship is part of the provision in the prayer life of the school. An excellent example ,as a plenary session of a lesson ,was observed during the inspection in Year 6. This quality should be replicated in all year groups. Pupils are familiar with the traditional prayers of the church and are happy to share their own spontaneous prayers with others.

At all prayer sessions pupils are reverent and respectful.

The pupils are aware of their responsibility to care for the less fortunate in society and make generous contributions to local, national and international charities.

## How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

### Grade 2

Overall St. Clare's makes good provision for the spiritual development of its pupils. Throughout the school year opportunities for pupils, parents, governors, staff and parishioners, to develop their relationship with God and each other, are provided through whole school Masses at the beginning and end of term and other special feast days. At these celebrations the older pupils are involved with the readings, bidding prayers and music. In May a special service to honour our Blessed Lady is held. Mothering Sunday is celebrated with a special family Mass. A Carol service is held at Christmas. During Lent the Stations of the Cross are followed. Special Assemblies for Harvest time and Advent are celebrated.

Year 3 and 4 pupils attend Mass each week. In the future it is hoped to include Year 5 and 6 on a rota basis to prepare for the new liturgy of the Mass. The "Pupils Promise" plays a major role in setting the tone and ethos for the school. The pupils promise to live the school Mission Statement in their daily lives. This is certainly successful for any visitor to this large school will be surprised at the calm encountered throughout the school building. With the support of the parish priest, the school organises the Sacramental Programme. There is little input from the parish, therefore the diocesan model is not fully implemented. Both the school and the parish priest are keen to involve the wider parish community in this important aspect of parish life, thus developing and strengthening home, school, parish links.

Younger pupils are involved in the very successful "Childrens Liturgy at Sunday Mass. This is organised by the designated governor for Religious Education. The Religious Education curriculum is enhanced through music, role play and involvement with a Theatre Company who present plays with a religious theme. The time allocated to curriculum Religious Education meets both national and diocesan requirements. The school is in the process of implementing the diocesan scheme "The Way, the Truth and The Life. "The Religious Education co-ordinator has led the teachers through this process, after attending training, and all lessons are now planned using this model. Assessment was identified as an issue at the last inspection. Pupils work has been collected but none has been levelled or moderated to ensure a consistent approach to standardisation. There is no tracking to identify progress or lack of it. One class has begun this process. A system for assessing pupils work in Religious Education should be established as a priority.

The majority of lessons are well planned. Of the lessons observed during the inspection the majority were good with outstanding examples of teaching and learning observed in upper Key Stage Two. In the best lessons the learning objectives were clearly explained, there was a good mix of direct teacher input and discussions. Resources were well selected and used effectively to enhance the learning process. A range of teaching strategies are used to meet the requirement of the lesson and the ages of the pupils. The plenary session was used to bring the lesson to a satisfactory conclusion. In most classes work is well marked. Extra effort is praised and suggestions given for how improvements could be made.

The school has policies for Religious Education and Prayer and Worship

## **LEADERS AND MANAGERS**

### **How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School**

**Grade 2**

Leaders and managers promote the Catholic life of the school effectively in many respects. The Mission Statement is easily understandable by the pupils. It is at the forefront of all policies, on display in every classroom and throughout the school. It is regularly reviewed and permeates all aspects of school life. The "Pupils Promise" is an example of the commitment the whole school community make to living out the aims of the Mission Statement in their daily life. Effective and attractive displays, throughout the school clearly reflect its faith life. Every class has a focal point for prayer.

For such a large school the governing body has been successful in recruiting Catholic teachers. 17 of the 20 teachers are Catholics. However because of a long term absence of a teacher, this year, non Catholic teachers have been teaching Year 3 pupils. This has had a negative impact on the Sacramental Programme preparation. Permanent Catholic teachers have been appointed for September 2011. 7 teachers hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or its equivalent qualification, an additional teacher is currently studying for this qualification. The governing body is encouraged to support all teachers in acquiring this qualification. The governing body is kept informed of the current provision through the headteacher's reports. The designated governor is a regular visitor to the school and is aware of the changes to the Religious Education curriculum. Governors frequently attend school Masses in church and assemblies and celebrations in school. The chair of governors together with other governors attend training provided by the local authority and the diocese to help them fulfil their role. Several new governors have been appointed recently and the chair believes this has extended the expertise of the governing body helping them to fulfil their role as "critical friends" of the school. The headteacher and his deputy as Religious Education co-ordinator, give good leadership to their large staff. They monitor the standards of provision in curriculum Religious Education and prayer and worship. This monitoring and evaluation needs to be more systematic and rigorous in order to identify concerns and rectify them earlier. Resources are audited and supplemented as necessary. A considerable amount of money being allocated to introduce the new Religious Education curriculum.

The school makes very good provision to give the pupils a growing role in the community. There are strong links with the local Catholic High school who visit each week to support Year 2 with their reading. The school choir take part in the Manchester Christmas sing-a-round. Pupils support an ex pupil working with a charity in Tanzania. The older pupils have been helping a local convent with their gardening. Through being an Eco school a link has been fostered with the Co-operative Academy of Manchester. Pupils from 3 different schools have been on work experience in the school. Visits out of school to places of interest plus visitors invited into school to speak about their lives all ensure community cohesion is being successfully developed at St Clare's school.

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