

**INSPECTION REPORT**

Telephone: 0161 817 2204

Email: [education@dioceseofsalford.org.uk](mailto:education@dioceseofsalford.org.uk)

**Inspection carried out Under Canon 806  
and in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

Name of School                    **St Monica's Roman Catholic Primary School, Woodsend Road South, Flixton, Manchester M41 6QB**

Inspection date                    15<sup>th</sup> March 2019

Reporting Inspectors            Damian Harrison and Pam Macro

Type of school	Primary
URN	106356
Age range of pupils 3-11	3-11
Number on roll -	336
Appropriate authority	The Governing board
Chair of Governors	Andrew Fahey
Headteacher	Louise Davies
Religious Education Co-ordinator	Charlotte Morrison
Date of previous inspection	February 2014

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades
Overall effectiveness of the school	2	1 = Outstanding  2 = Good  3=Requires Improvement  4 = Inadequate
The quality of Catholic Leadership	2	
The Catholic life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)	1	
The quality of Religious Education (incorporating Word)	2	
The quality of Worship	2	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

## **CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL**

St Monica's is a large Catholic primary school situated in the Flixton area of Trafford, Manchester. It has 336 children on roll, including those in maintained nursery provision. The proportion of the children from disadvantaged homes (16%) is below that found nationally. The number of children with special needs and disabilities (16%) is broadly average, and this is rising year on year. However, the number of children with Education, Health and Care plans (9) is higher than the national average. Very few children have English as an additional language. A new parish is being created which will be served by the three primary schools of St Monica's, Our Lady of the Rosary and English Martyrs. Extremely close links currently exist with the parish of St Monica's, and there is a sense of excitement and optimism about the potential of the new relationships and collaboration within the new parish community. 70% of the children are baptised Roman Catholic. 12 teachers are Catholic, 4 are non-Catholic, with 7 having the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies.

## **THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:**

- **The links between the parish and the school are exceptionally well developed and valued, creating a wonderfully cohesive Catholic community.**
- **This is a deeply caring school with the well-being of pupils and staff given the highest priority, leading to a climate of trust and respect in which everyone feels valued, happy and safe.**
- **St Monica's is a totally inclusive school with a profound sense of 'family'. The extent to which everyone feels welcomed, involved and proud of this community is impressive.**
- **The headteacher, through her deeply committed ministry and highly effective leadership, has played a central role in the development of the outstanding Catholic life of the school.**
- **The school's mission and its well-understood core purpose permeates all aspects of school leading to the exceptional quality of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum.**

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS GOOD**

St Monica's is an exceptionally caring school which provides an outstanding welcome to all. Its fully inclusive ethos reaches out to everyone, creating a highly valued sense of family. Throughout the school its Mission Statement is lived out giving witness to the values of the Gospel in a very special way – the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The experienced headteacher leads the school extremely well and has created a strong team around her who fully buy into her vision and direction. The Governing Board is effective, passionate and hard-working in their support of the school and its journey of improvement. The quality of Religious Education is good and improving. Under the committed leadership of the Religious Education leader, the school is improving in all areas. Standards are high and the children make good progress. They enjoy a curriculum which is varied and appropriate. The school now needs to explore ways in which greater challenge can be provided for the children by giving them more sustained learning experiences with the opportunity for greater independence and ownership of their learning. Teachers take the lead in lessons too much. Greater opportunities could be taken to celebrate children's work in classrooms, to use this to support and celebrate learning and to model good examples of learning outcomes. Prayer and worship has been a real focus of the school and this has led to significant improvements in this area, and is now a central feature of school life. To develop this even further, the school could look for more opportunities for the children to lead prayer with greater creativity. These can include a higher level of stillness and contemplative prayer, and to ensure that this is reflected throughout, as seen in the best practice in the school. This will help to achieve an increasingly atmospheric feel in all acts of worship. In its journey towards outstanding, the school is well placed to begin to reach out to both support and learn from other schools and providers in a more structured way. This will help with the school's rigour in evaluating accurately where the next steps for improvement are.

Since the previous inspection, which highlighted the need for school chaplains (which have been introduced and this is now embedded) and to introduce more meditative prayer, the school continues to make improvements in the quality of Catholic education it provides. Parents express the highest admiration in how they are welcomed and cared

for in this truly inclusive Catholic school. With the strong and distributed leadership across the board, St Monica's has great potential to move from strength to strength.

#### **THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS GOOD.**

The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership. She has been particularly successful in creating the outstanding Catholic life of the school and the deeply felt sense of family. She is supported by a dedicated and committed governing board who carry out their role with pride and passion. Along with the headteacher, they ensure that the school's exceptionally warm Catholic culture and mission remains at the heart of the school. The Religious Education subject leader is capably driving forward improvements and plays a pivotal role in the successes and developments which have been made. Leadership at all levels is good and teamwork is strong. There is a real cohesion which exists and a high level of belonging throughout the school. This results in the children achieving well, making good progress and being happy in school. Pupils are now taking on their own leadership roles and are developing rapidly in their responsibilities to make their school and broader community a better place to be. The school now needs to reach out and work more strategically with other schools and providers – both to support the sharing of the outstanding practice at St Monica's and to learn and grow from the best practice elsewhere. This will inform the school's strategic road to outstanding and to assist the staff and governing board in the school's self-evaluation process. The opportunity arising from the creation of the new parish, the three schools involved and the undoubted enthusiasm of the parish priest to maximise the potential of this, will be a well-timed starting point.

#### **THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL (INCORPORATING WELCOME, WELFARE AND WITNESS) IS OUTSTANDING.**

The Catholic life of St Monica's is truly exceptional. It is an extremely welcoming school. It reaches out to its families and the parish creating a strong sense of 'family'. Parents express their overwhelmingly positive views about the school, typically talking about their deep sense of involvement and how everyone feels part of what goes on. 'We are a true family,' said one parent, 'this is an all-inclusive school'. Induction into the school is highly effective and this is valued by parents. They find the headteacher and staff very approachable and supportive, particularly those who have children with SEND or are experiencing difficulties. The staff know the families really well and communication is very good. The wonderful welcome provided is underpinned by the exceptional quality of care which exists. St Monica's puts the welfare of its families and staff at the heart of its Catholic mission. The collaboration with Caritas and the provision of the Rainbows groups for children needing pastoral intervention are just two of the wide range of approaches the school uses to look after its families. The school is working towards Achievement for All status, which demonstrates just one of the many examples of the school's strong commitment to the most vulnerable children. The pupils say that they are safe and happy, they love school and have great friendships. Relationships throughout are exceptionally strong. St Monica's is a school which gives outstanding witness to the Gospel through its extremely strong Catholic ethos. The headteacher and leadership team, including the governing board, place the faith dimension of the school at the heart of everything they do. As a result, the whole school community contributes to the school as a beacon of hope. This is further enhanced by the strength of the relationship with the parish. A wide and varied range of activities take place which allow the children to contribute to the common good and be charitable to others. For example, the school, in close liaison with the parish, has facilitated the welcome of two Syrian refugee families into the community. Also 'eco-bricks' are being created to raise awareness of recycling and waste management. The school's GIFT team are developing into a powerful group of young people who understand how they can have an impact on and improve the world they live in. All this leads to the school's living and vibrant Catholic culture.

#### **THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (INCORPORATING WORD) IS GOOD**

The quality of Religious Education is good and clearly rooted in the school's vibrant mission as a Catholic school. The children's books demonstrate a curriculum which is varied and interesting. Standards of work are high across the school and the children make progress which is steady and sustained. Religious Education is at the heart of the school's curriculum. 'The Way, the Truth and Life' provides the basis for this and this is supplemented by other resources and approaches. At least 10% of the curriculum is allocated to Religious Education. The children are very proud of their 'Sharing the Faith' books which capture some of the work and activities done outside of the Religious Education books. Some of the work is not differentiated enough to provide sufficient challenge for the children, particularly those who are working at higher levels. Occasionally, all of the children in two age groups were doing similar work, sometimes with relatively low outcome worksheets or short, limited activities. The school should explore the potential, which arises from the children's excellent

attitudes to learning, to provide and expect longer and sustained pieces of work to give greater depth and breadth to their studies. The quality of teaching and learning is good and features the high quality of relationships seen across the school. Teachers work hard to plan for a varied and exciting curriculum. Sometimes the learning becomes passive because there is too much direction and intervention from teachers and this limits the children's responses. Greater ownership and independence can be given to the children with the autonomy to work on longer and sustained pieces of work where the children lead their own learning, research and ideas, rather than this being provided by the teacher. The school is brightly displayed and reflects the priority given to the Catholic life of the school. This can be further enhanced by a greater level of celebrating the children work around the school, and particularly in classes, to model and support the learning of others and demonstrate the best work around the school.

### **THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS GOOD**

The quality of prayer and worship in the school is good. The school has prioritised this as a key area of improvement and significant developments have been made. This has been enhanced by a range of high quality INSET opportunities for the staff. Worship is now much more varied and the children are taking greater responsibility for leading prayer and delivering acts of worship, particularly the GIFT team. Song and music is at the heart of prayer activities. From a very young age, the children understand how powerful prayer is and how it can play such a significant part in one's life. The children pray with reverence and talk about how much they enjoy this aspect of school life. The high quality of the relationship with the parish enhances this further. During the inspection, the quality of worship was varied. At its best, there was a high level of stillness and reflection, with the children playing a prominent role in the direction of the prayer and a highly atmospheric feel which was deeply moving to witness. In some cases, this was less evident - the children weren't as engaged, it was predominantly led by the adult, and the prayerful atmosphere diminished. The school could explore how to give the children the opportunity to develop more creative approaches in how they plan, lead and deliver prayer independently. This would allow more time for stillness and contemplative worship and to ensure that the excellent practice which exists at St Monica's happens across the whole school.

### **AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- **To develop further the quality of prayer and worship in order to create greater opportunity for reflective and contemplative prayer, with the children increasingly planning and delivering highly creative acts of worship, with the focus on developing the atmospheric nature of these.**
- **To improve the standard of teaching and learning in Religious Education so that all learning is of the highest quality, with children taking greater ownership and independence, to provide more differentiated challenge for those working at greater depth, and to allow more sustained learning driven by the children.**
- **To increase the outreach work of the school with other partners in order to provide internal challenge within the school, to offer support and the sharing of good practice to others and to use this to improve the school's processes of self-evaluation.**
- **To refine the school's systems of monitoring the standards of teaching and learning outcomes, by exploring the ways that the classroom's environment can support and challenge pupils' learning through increasing the level of celebration, display and modelling of pupils' work around the school.**