



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

School: ST. MARY'S AND ST. BENEDICT'S R.C. PRIMARY SCHOOL  
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URN: 119704

Headteacher: Mrs. Anne Hardisty  
Acting Chair of Governors: Mr. Stephen Swindlehurst

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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: 21<sup>st</sup> September 2011  
Date of previous inspection: July 2008  
Reporting Inspector: Mrs. Pauline Leatherbarrow

## **Information about the school**

**St. Mary's and St. Benedict's is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford. It serves the parish of St. Mary's in Bamber Bridge. The school is situated in a mixed social area, with a significant number of families whose social circumstances are significantly less favourable than national averages. The admission number has recently been increased to 45 and there are currently 266 pupils on roll aged 4-11 years of age. 81% of the children are baptised Catholics. The percentage of children with special educational needs is mostly in line or higher than national and local averages. There are approximately 20% of pupils eligible for free school meals.**

**The school is presently undergoing a substantial refurbishment on a phased basis.**

**The head teacher has been in post since September 2008, initially as acting head until her permanent appointment in September 2009. The deputy head and RE subject co-ordinator has been in post since September 2010. A new parish priest has recently been appointed to the parish of St. Mary's from August 2011. The vice-chair of Governors has been acting chair after the recent resignation of the previous chair of Governors. There are 10.5 teachers 9.5 of whom are Catholic. 6 teachers have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.**

## **Overall Effectiveness**

**Grade 2**

**The overall effectiveness of the school is good. The school works hard to ensure Religious Education for all children and the spiritual life of the school is very good. Mass is planned and celebrated in church regularly. Assemblies are linked to the Liturgical year and are well planned. Behaviour is very good both in class and around school. Good behaviour is achieved through positive reinforcement and there are many opportunities for encouragement and praise. Children are polite and well mannered. All Staff provide excellent role models and form very good relationships with pupils.**

**Religious education is monitored well with regular assessments, observations and book scrutinies which are well embedded by the Head Teacher and RE co-ordinator. Teachers encourage children to participate fully in their Religious Education and technology is well used to enhance their provision through the use of Interactive whiteboards, laptops and the daily broadcast presented by pupils.**

**The school has a committed headteacher and she is well supported by the Deputy Head Teacher and senior management team. The Governing Body have been supportive with the RE Subject Governor holding regular meetings with the RE co-ordinator.**

## **Capacity for sustained improvement**

**Grade 2**

The school is working very hard to continue to raise standards in Religious Education and there is a well established system for monitoring and evaluating Religious Education. Children's work is assessed and levelled termly and the RE subject leader keeps all the information in a well organised curriculum file for new and existing staff to refer to as guidance. Strategies for monitoring of teaching and learning are in place with regular classroom observations as well as work scrutinies taking place.

Links with the parish priest and parishioners have been very good. A new parish priest has recently been appointed in August 2011. He is enthusiastic to carry on the super work of his predecessor. The Governing Body are in the process of change. Three governors have recently resigned and the vice-chair has taken on the role of acting chair. Whilst these changes bring about new challenges, the head teacher and SMT are well equipped to deal with future developments positively.

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

- 1. Build positive relationships with the new parish priest and chair of governors in leading the school forward.**
- 2. Involve staff in moderation of work so that all staff become aware of the different levels expected.**
- 3. Increase involvement of parents in the prayer life of the school**

## **PUPILS**

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

**Grade 2**

**St Mary's and St. Benedict's is a good Catholic school. A tracking system shows that attainment in Religious Education is good. Special needs pupils are very well supported by a hard working and very competent team of TA's and HLTA.**

**Children reported that they are very proud of their school. Leadership qualities are developed in older pupils through allocating responsibility roles, the School Council, playleaders and Buddy system. The School Council plays an important role in making school decisions for example in developing the playground and playing fields. They have also been instrumental in charity fund raising initiatives such as St. Joseph's Penny, the Ghana Football Project and other charities. Various stalls selling items decided by each class were agreed to help raise additional funds for St. Joseph's Penny. The School Council meet regularly with Welfare Assistants to discuss issues raised at lunch times and how they can be resolved. Children are praised for good behaviour during lessons and achievement is celebrated at weekly Celebration Assemblies.**

**Assemblies are planned with pupil involvement. Each class takes turns to plan a weekly assembly linked to the Liturgical year. Families are invited to the Celebration assemblies and more recently to Collective Worship. The prayer life of the school is very good and this was observed during the inspection within a Year 3 / 4 class worship which was based on 'Families'. There was very good use of scripture, background music for reflection and the use of traditional and pupil led prayers.**

**The use of 'Reflection Books' are used to record pupil's innermost thoughts and feelings on different topics and form part of the prayer focal point in class. The very successful daily broadcast presented by children and observed by the whole school ensures that a 'Thought for the day' and reflection is shared with everyone in addition to general school announcements.**

**The Sacramental programme is primarily organised by the parish. A number of staff has also been involved in being Catechists and a parishioner and ex-teacher spends additional time with Year 3 during lunch times to help pupils prepare for the sacraments.**

## **How effective the provision is for Catholic Education**

**Grade 2**

The provision for Catholic Education at St. Mary's and St. Benedict's is generally good with some outstanding aspects. The school is using the new Religious Education scheme 'The Way the Truth and the Life' in total. Staff have attended training sessions to aid introduction of the new scheme. Very good use of ICT was evident throughout the school.

Teachers have positive relationships with the children which generates interest and respect observed during lessons during the inspection. Behaviour was of a very good standard. Children who require additional support for managing behaviour or learning difficulties are well catered for by Teaching Assistants and HLTA. Volunteer helpers are frequent visitors in school to help support reading and other activities.

There are well presented prayer focus areas in the classrooms and around school. Displays observed in both KS1 and KS2 are very good, including world faiths of Hinduism and Judaism. Displays include a wide range of pupil work and an excellent selection of artefacts.

Work in pupil's books is good, clearly marked and annotated to include praise and setting targets to improve their work. Strategies are in place to monitor pupil achievement including book trawls, walkthrough's and observations which are regularly planned for throughout the year.

An outstanding lesson was observed in upper KS2 based on 'Co-creators and De-creators'. This was a thought provoking lesson where children were given the opportunity to think carefully with a learning partner about what they could do to show that they cared for the world, people and animals in a practical way. Good use of ICT observed as children worked with their learning partner. All children were on task and the plenary allowed time to share ideas. In addition children were finally allowed 'reflective' time at the end of the lesson to think about what they as an individual could do to be a better co-creator in the immediate future.

A very good lesson was observed in KS1 based on the bible scripture story of Abraham. Lots of praise and support was given at the outset and the story read to engage interest. Children's understanding of the scripture reading was queried by the class teacher at set points and children were given the opportunity to express how they might feel if they were in a similar circumstance. The use of 'talking partners' was used effectively. Subsequent work was clearly differentiated. An additional group of children were asked to present in drama the story of Abraham.

There are an increasing number of children from other faiths and these children are successfully integrated into the life of the school. No parents have requested that their child be withdrawn from religious Education.

## **LEADERS AND MANAGERS**

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

**Grade 2**

**St. Mary's and St. Benedict's is led by a very committed and hard working Head Teacher and well supported by her Deputy and SMT. The Governing Body have been supportive and in particular the Religious Education Governor has been involved in meeting on a termly basis with the Religious Education subject leader to monitor progress and discuss RE development.**

**The vice-chair is a regular visitor in school and is able to witness the school's Catholic ethos and its religious and moral standards.**

**The Head Teacher reports to Governors termly which includes a section on Religious Education. The Deputy Head (RE subject leader) has a major role in feeding into the school's improvement plan and what needs to be addressed both short term and long term.**

**Staff attend relevant training organised by the Diocese linked to Religious Education and are aware of the changes required to the RE scheme of work. They have been fully supportive in agreeing to the funding for the new scheme 'The Way the Truth and the Life' which is now fully implemented.**

**The Governing Body have been keen to appoint committed Catholic teachers wherever possible to promote the shared vision in the school. Very recent changes to the Governing Body and a new parish priest provide challenges ahead. However, the new Parish Priest and Vice-Chair of Governors are very keen to continue the excellent work achieved to date in supporting the school in the future. An example of this is the parish committee formed to encourage closer links with school and parish and encourage parents to attend Mass on Sunday, will continue to build on the firm foundations created. For example, the school daily broadcast has been extended to Sunday Mass and this will be continued.**