

INSPECTION REPORT  
**St Mary's RC Primary School,**  
**Kynder Street, Denton, Tameside, M34 2AR**

Inspection date 18<sup>th</sup> June 20155  
 Reporting Inspector Mr Andrew Sowerby  
 Mrs Anne Heard

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

Type of School Primary  
 URN 106252  
 Age range of pupils 3-11 years  
 Number on roll 237  
 Appropriate authority The Governing Body  
 Chair of Governors Mr John Galvin  
 Headteacher Ms Deidre Reeves  
 Religious Education Subject Leaders Mrs L Nickeas and Mrs R Farrell  
 Date of previous inspection May 2010

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades  1 = Outstanding  2 = Good  3=Requires Improvement  4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
The quality of the Word of God community	1	
The quality of the Welcome community	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	1	
The quality of Witness	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

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

St Mary's R.C. Primary and Nursery School Denton is a voluntary aided Catholic Primary School serving the needs of the parish of St. Mary's and St John Fisher. The children who attend the school come mainly from the parish but a small number of children travel from outside due to the popularity of the school. Currently 94% of pupils are baptised Catholics. The pupils who are aged 4-11 years are arranged in single age classes. Mobility is low with 95% of children who start school in reception completing Year 6. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a small number of pupils 8.4% of the school population for whom English is not their first language. The percentage of disadvantaged pupils (16.4%) is below that seen nationally although there has been a sharp rise in eligibility for the Pupil Premium Grant. The total percentage of pupils identified with SEND is 8.8%. The school has a strong commitment to a range of successful accreditations including Healthy Schools Standard, School Games Gold Award, Active Mark, Eco School Award and International School Award.

The school is currently a National Support School. The headteacher is a National Leader of Education and a Diocesan Leader of Education.

There are 10 full time and 1 part time members of the teaching staff of whom 9 are Catholic. 4 members of staff hold the Catholic Teacher's Certificate or its equivalent and a further 2 are working towards the qualification.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Mary's is an outstanding Catholic Primary school. From the minute you enter the building an atmosphere of warmth and friendliness is evident to all. All children are offered a Catholic education in a caring and supportive environment where children's individual needs are fully met. The Word of God is central to the life of the school. The governing body, parish priest and parish sister ensures the pastoral and spiritual needs of the learners and their families are very well met. The inspirational headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leaders have very high expectations of adults and children. Together with the hard working staff they have created an ethos where everyone recognises the need to work together as a 'family', showing love and concern for all its members. This work is further enhanced by the support of an effective governing body. The children love coming to school. This was expressed clearly by all children but especially the school chaplains who are a tremendous ambassador for the school. They all expressed how very proud they are of all the opportunities given to them. Pupils are friendly, polite and welcoming and their behaviour at all times is exemplary. They work hard to fulfil the high expectations of the adults who work with them. The children are enthusiastic learners who fully engage in the life of the school. The staff and pupils demonstrate a very high level of respect, care and service to others. The outstanding teaching and learning; the creative and imaginative use of the learning environment; as well as the high quality interactive displays which supports the children's faith journey ensure that all children receive a vibrant Catholic Education. The high quality acts of collective worship enable all children to develop and embrace their own sense of spirituality on their personal faith journey.

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

- Outstanding leadership across the school.
- Outstanding teaching and learning.
- Excellent relationships.
- The exemplary behaviour of the children.
- The creative and stimulating approach to teaching and learning.

## **THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING**

The quality of Catholic leadership is outstanding. There is very strong leadership at all levels of the school community, which contributes significantly to the outstanding provision for Catholic Education that the school currently provides. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leaders provide an extremely clear vision for the school. They provide outstanding role models for the whole school community and as a result

the development of the Catholic life of the school is at the forefront of the school's work. They are supported by a knowledgeable and challenging Governing Body. The school has a clear plan for developing R E across the school and this is reflected in the priority it is given. Evidence for this can be found in the school's clear self-evaluation plan, which is based on the 5Ws model. The school is aware of its next steps and has clear plans for implementing them. As a result, the inspectors can verify that this evaluation is both accurate and reflective. The effective governing body has a clear sense of vision for the school and is aware of the need to continue to improve the school's learning environment so as to ensure that the school can continue to provide a high quality Catholic education.

### **THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS OUTSTANDING**

The recently revised school's Mission Statement is clearly displayed throughout the school. It is known, lived and witnessed to and is evident at every level of the school. Consequently it has developed in the children a great sense of pride and belonging in the whole Catholic family of St Mary's. This was evidenced in the confident manner in which the children could explain how it had been improved in order to make it more child friendly. The staffing and resources devoted to RE are of the highest standard, reflecting its significance and importance in the school. Teaching is consistently good and often outstanding across the school with many examples of excellent practice. Pupils are challenged to engage with the big questions of the purpose and meaning of life throughout the curriculum. Examples of this were seen in all Key Stages. Scripture is clearly known, understood and made relevant throughout the school. There is evidence on the displays in the classroom and halls of the importance of this. In all classrooms there is clear evidence of the centrality of prayer and worship in the children's lives and how this is linked to the RE curriculum. Pupils are actively trained in outreach to the local community. This can be seen in the number of charities that the school supports. These are not just the Catholic charities such as CAFOD and St Joseph's Penny but also national charities such as Children in Need. Overall the standards of attainment, progress and hence achievement are outstanding. As the curriculum is based on the school's mission it is challenging, interesting and fulfilling. The children are developing the age appropriate knowledge and skills. The school has incorporated "The Way, The Truth and the Life" scheme. This is well supplemented by other RE resources so that as a result standards of learning are outstanding. Work in RE is clearly as excellent as work in other subjects due to the high priority given to it in school. This was seen by inspectors during the scrutiny of both the RE and Literacy books. Marking was consistently good in RE whilst the school has a clear and coherent system for tracking the children's attainment in RE.

### **THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING**

St Mary's is a school where everyone feels welcome. Parents were keen to express their views by saying "that the school goes out of its way to ensure that children and parents are made to feel part of the school community from the induction to transfer". Whilst another commented that "we are all members of a loving family here where everyone gets on with each other" The importance of the dignity of the individual is clearly evident at all levels. This could be seen in the way that all pupils and staff treated children with special educational needs in a respectful and caring manner so that their self-esteem is raised and their needs met. All members of the school community demonstrate a very high level of belonging and ownership of the school. Pupils are given a high level of responsibility in creating and sustaining the schools sense of welcome. The school chaplains and school council have provided all the children with the opportunity to have their voice heard in the development of all aspects in the life of the school. Parents are very welcome in school and are encouraged to engage in their child's learning. This could clearly be seen in the way that staff from the nursery and reception classes met parents at the start of the school day and discussed any concerns that they had with them. Parents are kept informed and up to date about the curriculum and events in school through the use of the school newsletter and school website. The school also ensures that the voice of the children is heard and respected. The children were keen to express their opinion about the changes they had brought about in school such as the provision of improved play facilities and the development of the outdoor area. Within school relationships are of the highest quality. During the course of the inspection the children's behaviour was outstanding. This is due to the exceptional support provided for all children by the whole staff team.

### **THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING**

The school provides structures and procedures that ensure that all pupils and staff feel safe and are treated with respect and dignity. This was evidenced in the way that members of staff cared for children who were hurt or unwell. The outreach support provided by the school ensures that the needs of parents and young families are met in a structured and sensitive manner. The provision of a variety of before and after school activities all support the needs of the families that the school serves. All pupils and staff feel safe and free to express their opinions and know that these will be valued. This was seen both during discussions with the children and also with the school council who expressed their opinions about the variety of opportunities provided for them and how they felt empowered to express their opinions. Importance and recognition is given equally to all. The school is a very caring community where everyone is valued! During lessons children listened respectfully to other pupils' ideas. The School Chaplaincy Team and the School Council provide good role models for younger children to follow and help to ensure that the school is a calm and orderly place to work. This has ensured that outstanding behaviour occurs across the school and the welfare of children is very well catered for. Calm support is offered by sensitive adults when children have difficulty remaining on task. Such role models ensure learning and good relationships develop. This could be seen in the way that children with special educational needs and disabilities were managed within the classroom so that a purposeful learning environment was encountered.

### **THE QUALITY OF THE WORSHIP COMMUNITY IS OUTSTANDING**

The school provides a variety of worship opportunities for pupils throughout the school: prayer, reflection, and para liturgies, including small and large groups. These are appropriate to their backgrounds and faith experience. The inclusive and reflective collective acts of worship help pupils to grow in confidence in prayer and develop their relationship with God. This could be seen in the both the whole school assembly and the beautiful Foundation Stage worship where all the children were provided with the opportunity to reflect quietly upon the meaning of the gospel message. The spiritual needs of all members of the school community are very well met so that those children and staff who are non-Catholic also have the opportunity to develop their own spirituality. Children feel confident in leading prayer services; evidence of this was seen in Key Stage 2 where children confidently and reflectively led acts of worship. There are developing links between the parish and the school particularly with regard to the preparation of the children for the Sacraments of Initiation. The school has a developing chaplaincy team who are beginning to make a real impact on the prayer life of the school. Acts of collective worship take place in a variety of formats but also are linked clearly to the liturgical year. Children pray in classes, small groups and individually with great reverence, respect and thought. Pupils are comfortable with their feelings and have a good and knowledgeable vocabulary. Each class has a special area of focus. The children know many school prayers and compose powerful prayers for themselves. In many classes there were examples of displays of the children's own prayers. Attractive displays which were seen around school are used to show and stimulate prayer opportunities. Hymns, music and singing enhanced the quality and enjoyment of prayer in school.

### **THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING**

All staff act as excellent role models for the children and help them in recognising that God is with them in every aspect of school life. Adults and pupils witness to the Mission Statement of the school, which informs everything and is explicit in policies and the lived experience of the whole community. Adults act as role models of the school's mission and values and as key promoters of the ethos of the school for the pupils and the school community's witness to the wider community. The staff and pupils feel confident and secure in their witness to Christ, the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. Pupils are confident in witnessing to the beliefs and values of a Catholic community and are actively encouraged and supported in being pro-active citizens who participate in the decision-making processes at a local and national level. This is seen in the way the school promotes support for various charities so as to promote support for the Common Good. An explicit Catholic culture permeates the whole of school and is clearly identifiable through relationships, decision-making and actions. The entire school community recognises that God is at the heart of the school in their actions and their relationships. All live the word of God. The mission statement is the powerful tool which is used to demonstrate how the school bears witness to a loving God. All members of the school family meet God each day and strive to meet all the challenges involved in this witness.

**AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

- To further develop and enhance the role of pupil chaplains.
- To develop and enhance links with the parish of St Mary and St John Fisher so as to further improve the spiritual development of the staff and children.

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for making our visit to St. Mary's so enjoyable when we came to inspect your school for the Bishop. We really enjoyed being with you. Thank you for looking after us so well and helping us to feel very welcome. St. Mary's is an outstanding Catholic school.

We enjoyed being part of your lessons and were sorry not to see everyone. Thank you for showing us so much of your work and activities. We could see that you are very proud of your school and all that you have achieved together. We were particularly impressed that you thought that the most important part of your learning and life together was that you *'felt connected to one another as all part of God's family'*. We know the Bishop will be delighted to hear this.

Your teachers are really helping you to learn very well and we were very impressed by your excellent relationships and behaviour. It was good to see so much of your new Mission Statement coming through everything you are learning; your relationships and the special way you make everyone feel valued. It is wonderful to see a school made up of pupils and adults who get on so well together so that everyone is cared for as a member of God's family. This is a true reflection of being part of a Catholic community where everyone is welcome and has a place.

You continue to use the RE programme very well, whilst your teachers have found many interesting and creative ways to enhance the Religious Education they teach you. You are a very creative school and we were most impressed by the way you work together so co-operatively in your lessons. The prayer services we saw were very good and uplifting experiences. We have asked your teachers to continue to develop the School Chaplaincy Team and also to continue to work closely with Fr Peter at St. Mary' Church so as to help you all understand more about your faith and relationship with God.

God bless you all and have a really happy summer holiday.

Yours sincerely,

Mr A.J Sowerby  
Mrs A. Heard  
(Section 48 Inspectors)

## **Summary Report to Parents**

On Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015 the school was inspected in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The full report has been made available to the school and can also be accessed via both the school website and the Education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

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