

St Catherine's R.C. Primary School, School Rd, Didsbury, Manchester, M20 6HS.

Inspection date 25th June 2015

Reporting Inspector Mr Andrew Sowerby
Mr Jim Graves

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

Type of School Primary
 URN 105524
 Age range of pupils 3-11
 Number on roll 463
 Appropriate authority The Governing Body
 Chair of Governors Mr John Williams
 Headteacher Miss Nina Chwastek
 Religious Education Subject Leader Mr Robert Tanti
 Date of previous inspection February 2009

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

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Catherine's Primary School is a larger than average sized primary school with a nursery in Didsbury, Manchester. There are currently 463 children on roll, including 60 in the nursery class. Currently 97.8% of pupils are baptised Catholics. The pupils, who are aged 3-11 years, are arranged in single age classes. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a small number of pupils 7.7% of the school population for whom English is not their first language. Mobility is low with 89.6% of children who start school in Reception completing Year 6. The total percentage of pupils identified with SEND is 6.1% which is below the national average. The school has a strong commitment to a range of successful accreditations including: School Games Gold Award, Active Mark, International School Award and FMSIS. There are 16 full time and 2 part time members of the teaching staff of whom 15 are Catholic. Three staff hold the Catholic Teacher's Certificate and two others are completing this.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Catherine's is a good Catholic Primary school. There is an exceptionally warm and caring welcome given to all. Children are offered a Catholic education in a friendly and supportive environment. The headteacher, senior leadership team and enthusiastic RE subject leader have worked hard to develop a clear understanding of where the school is at and areas for future development. They are well supported and challenged by a knowledgeable governing body. The children have a rich experience of a variety of collective acts of worship, which ensures the pastoral and spiritual needs of the learners are well met. The mission statement, which was reviewed during the last academic year, has now been further developed to include core values and is brought alive through the commitment and sense of ownership of the whole school community. The children love coming to school and the school council, eco group and school chaplaincy team expressed how very safe they felt in school. Pupils are friendly, polite and welcoming and their behaviour at all times is exemplary. They work hard to achieve the high expectations of the adults who work with them. They enjoyed every opportunity to share their work with the inspectors. The staff and pupils demonstrate a very high level of respect, care and service to others. This is evidenced through their support for a variety of local initiatives and charities such as Caritas, Francis House and Cornerstone. The quality of relationships is a notable strength of the school.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The impact of the new leadership team on the school's development.
- The knowledgeable and challenging governing body.
- The behaviour of the pupils.
- The exceptional welcome given to all.
- Aspects of collective worship.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS GOOD

There is good leadership at all levels of the school community which contributes significantly to the good provision for Catholic education that the school currently provides. The hard working and dedicated headteacher provides strong and decisive leadership by clearly living her vision for Catholic education. She is an excellent role model for the whole school community. She ensures that along with her senior staff that the development of the Catholic life of the school is at the forefront of the school's work. They are supported by a knowledgeable governing body, an enthusiastic RE subject leader and a parish priest who is a regular visitor to the school. They, together with the other senior leadership of the school, ensure that the teaching of RE and the development of the Catholic life of the school have an extremely high priority in school. The school has a clear plan for developing RE across the school and this is reflected in the priority it is given.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS GOOD

The revised mission statement is clearly displayed throughout the school. It is known, lived and witnessed to and is evident at every level of the school. It is reflected in all school policies which have a significant impact on learning and the life of the school. The staffing and resources devoted to RE are of a high standard, reflecting its significance and importance in the school. St Catherine's Religious Education policy aims to "raise pupils' awareness of faith" and this was observed in the Early Years where children reflected positively on what they knew about St Catherine's church. The policy states that the school should help children "relate their Catholic faith to daily life" and this was observed in Key Stage 1 where children reflected on how to show love to their neighbour. Scripture is known throughout the school, although at the time of inspection, the majority of the evidence for this was in children's work and through their recordings in the classroom worship book. The school does, however, have clear plans to further develop this. The RE curriculum is 'The Way, The Truth and The Life', although the school intends to incorporate the 'Caritas in Action' and 'Come and See' schemes in order to further enhance learning in RE.

Pupils are challenged to engage with the 'Big Questions' of the purpose and meaning of life throughout the curriculum. This could be seen particularly in those lessons where children were challenged to implement the Gospel message in their own lives. Examples of this were seen in both key stages when children were asked to reflect upon such questions as "when do we know we are called to serve?" Based upon an evaluation of work scrutiny, lesson observations, discussions with pupils and analysis of data, teaching and achievement is judged to be good with some outstanding features. Marking and feedback to pupils was found to be variable in helping pupils understand how they could improve their knowledge and understanding in RE. The home, school and parish links are effective and the school supports the sacramental programme well. 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 the support the school gives to other local charities such as Cornerstones and those helping the earthquake victims of Nepal.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

From the moment one enters St Catherine's one is aware of the exceptional welcome the school provides. This was seen in the way that parents, grandparents and children were greeted at both the start and the end of the school day. Parents spoke highly of the information provided for them when children first come to the school and also of the way that the school deals with any concerns that parents have. The majority view of parents spoken to during the inspection was one of support, value and appreciation for the school. One felt that parents had been listened to in reinstating a celebration for the Sacramental Programme. Others said that the school was, "excellent, both my daughters are very happy," and "a great experience for my daughter's education," and a "fantastic school, very well organised." Another simply said, "I can't rave about it enough. Brilliant." Children also spoke very highly about their school, "everyone is kind" and "we don't think there would ever be bullying at St Catherine's." Community cohesion is evident on the playground and displays celebrated other faiths. Children take an active part in a variety of activities including the school council, eco group and pupil chaplaincy team. They appreciate the opportunity to influence the development of the school. Children reported that they regularly consult with the headteacher about developments of the school. Tangible evidence of this was witnessed in the availability of additional sports equipment that they requested.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS GOOD

There is within St Catherine's a culture where all are cared for and valued, and that dignity is of paramount importance. This is in keeping with the school's mission statement where it says that, "we are called to love one another as we seek to be the best in all that we learn and do." This was evident throughout the inspection, from the kind way that children interacted with each other in lessons, with the fun involved in play that was observed at break times and with the care that was shown to children from staff. They are clearly sensitive to the children's emotional needs and their behaviour was excellent. Children are confident that bullying is rare at St Catherine's, and believe that they should help if they ever experience it. The physical, spiritual and mental well-being of each person is central to the school's mission. The school council discussed with the inspectors the need to reach out with kindness to others, for example, those less fortunate in the world. Children are caring and have a true sense of right and wrong. Children listened respectfully during lessons to other pupils'

ideas. Calm support is offered by sensitive adults when children have difficulty remaining on task. Such role models ensure learning and loving friendships develop. The school goes to great lengths to ensure as far as possible children are free from worry and a happy, calm atmosphere is the norm. The school provides a variety of activities in order to ensure that this occurs. The mission is continued after school with a host of excellent clubs that are extremely varied hence meeting the needs and interests of all the children.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS GOOD

Prayer is at the heart of the school community and pupils are provided with a range of opportunities to develop and enrich their prayer life. All staff are trained and supported in furthering the prayer life of the school, so that teachers are confident at leading collective worship. There is clear evidence that children are becoming more involved in the planning and delivery of their own acts of worship throughout the school. An example of this was seen in the Foundation Stage where all children are provided with the opportunity to help plan and develop appropriate child led acts of worship. The children pray with reverence and have a good knowledge of both the traditional prayers of the church as well as being able to create their own. The pupil chaplaincy team are also beginning to play a more significant role in the development of the prayer life of the school. This was seen both during the morning act of collective worship and in the voluntary prayer activity about the gifts of the Holy Spirit provided for the children during the lunch break.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS GOOD

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. 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 Christian 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. Relationships are outstanding at St Catherine's and a strong sense of teamwork and belonging exists. The school and parish were described by parents as "a big family", where relationships are built on love and trust. The children have a highly defined sense of fairness and justice. They know their responsibilities in terms of equal opportunities, stewardship and reconciliation. Throughout the inspection, many acts of kindness were witnessed, particularly where a child with a broken arm was provided with friendship and support during break and lunchtimes. Displays showed that children know how to apply the teachings of the Gospel to modern day life, especially through the displays on the Gospels and British Values. Children were keen to show they are proud to support charities such as Cornerstones, Francis' House and St Joseph's Penny.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- To develop and further enhance the work of the Pupil Chaplains across the school.
- To embed the centrality and importance of scripture in teaching and learning.

25th June 2015

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making my visit to St Catherine'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. Catherine's is a good 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. I could see that you are very proud of your school and all that you have achieved together. I was 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'. I 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 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 have started using your new RE programme and are doing very well. You are a very creative school and I was most impressed by the way you work together so co-operatively in your lessons. The prayer services we saw were good and uplifting experiences. Your teachers have started to develop an excellent way of assessing how good the Catholic life of the school is and we have asked them to continue with this. We have especially asked them to continue to develop the work that school chaplaincy team are doing 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
Mr J Graves
(Section 48 Inspectors)

Summary Report to Parents

On 25th 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. Summary Report to Parents

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