

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about this school

- St. Mark's School is a smaller than average sized Catholic Primary School situated in Halewood in the Knowsley area of the Archdiocese and serves the parish of St. John Vianney, Halewood.
- There are 145 children on roll (excluding those in Nursery) of whom 129 are baptised Catholic and 24 come from other Christian denominations. There are 2 pupils from other faith traditions.
- There are 10 teachers at the school, 8 of whom teach Religious Education. Seven are Catholic. All the teachers have a suitable qualification in Religious Education.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Overall effectiveness:

St Mark's School provides outstanding Catholic Education.

Inspection Judgements

The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.

- Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic Life of the school and greatly benefit from it.
- They know and understand the school's Mission Statement, 'In a caring Christian community, together we learn to love, learn, laugh and achieve.' All pupils were involved in its review.
- Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to this school community. They understand the demands and responsibilities that living the mission places on them and have each written a way in which they can implement it each day by what they say and do. These reflections are beautifully displayed in the school hall as a constant reminder.
- Children are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility in the school and wider community e.g. as play leaders, school councillors and class monitors. Within these roles, they care for the needs of others and learn the values of commitment and dependability.
- Pupils are actively involved in developing the Catholic character of the school by raising awareness of and generously supporting a variety of charities including Nugent Care, Zoe's Place, their own class charities and by purchasing World Gifts from CAFOD.
- They embrace opportunities to meet their potential in all aspects of school life and benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities especially through the Children's University where they strive to make the most of their abilities and interests.
- All Year 6 pupils have the opportunity to participate actively in P.G.L. residential trips. Other year groups have opportunities for a variety of school trips. These experiences impact greatly on the pupils' social, cultural, spiritual and moral development.
- Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong and apply this in their personal relationships. They take an increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions within the code of conduct upheld by the school. Through this they develop positive attitudes including good manners, respect and self confidence.
- Education for pastoral care and personal relationships has fostered positive attitudes in pupils and respects the dignity of all. The school Learning Mentor takes circle time with each class every week enabling children to discuss a variety of topics within a confidential and supportive group. The SEAL Programme is used effectively to talk through sensitive issues.
- Children are happy in St. Mark's School. They thrive in the relaxed positive learning environment and are at ease with all adults in the school community.
- Pupils are involved in service to the local faith and religious communities. Celebrations e.g. through their links with St. Mary's Church of England / Methodist Church where they have participated in presentations including, 'Experience Christmas / Easter' and 'Remembrance'. The school choir go out into the community to visit and perform with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, at the St. Vincent de Paul Mass for the sick and housebound and for a Senior Citizens' group at Christmas time.

- Pupils show respect and understanding of other faiths and religions and have enjoyed learning about Judaism and Hinduism within the curriculum.

How well pupils' achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Overall, pupils' achievement in and enjoyment of Religious Education is good.
- Pupils achieve very well in Religious Education and make very good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities.
- Pupils' attainment in Religious Education is improving. Analysis of assessments undertaken provides evidence of pupils generally attaining an appropriate level for their age and stage of development in each key stage. There is some underachievement which needs to be addressed.
- There is no difference in performance between pupils of different gender.
- Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are also good.
- Pupils are becoming increasingly more religiously literate. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developing appropriate to their age or capacity.
- They are developing the skills that enable them to reflect spiritually, think ethically and theologically and are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.
- Pupils' engagement in and enjoyment of their learning is generally outstanding as shown by their interest and excellent behaviour in lessons. They enjoy recording their work in a variety of ways, e.g. through photographs, storyboards, drawings, charts etc. as well as personal writing and reflection.
- They appreciate the efforts staff members make to ensure their lessons are enjoyable, respond enthusiastically and speak highly of their teachers. Year 6 pupils spoke at their interview about how much they will miss their teachers when they transfer to High School because of how helpful and kind they are.
- Pupils are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively. They co-operate well with each other in group work and paired / shared activities. Across the school, children are respectful and considerate of each others' views and opinions.

How well pupils' respond to and participate in Collective Worship

- Pupils' response to and participation in Collective Worship is outstanding.
- They show keen interest, respond very well and actively participate in daily Collective Worship. A plethora of photographic and video evidence supports this.
- They act with reverence and respect at such times and are keen to participate in a variety of gatherings.
- Pupils' knowledge of prayer and liturgy is increasing. They are very familiar with responses from the Mass and with a variety of prayer styles.
- They appreciate and are open to the Word of God in the scriptures showing reverence.
- Pupils reflect in silence from an early age and join in community prayers appropriately and with confidence.
- They confidently prepare and lead worship in an increasing manner. Their evaluations show deep thought and understanding of the structure of Collective Worship so that by the end of Key Stage 2, their liturgical skills are highly developed.
- Years 5 and 6 prepare for their class Masses and actively participate.
- Pupils receive insight into special events in the Church's Year through their close links with St Mary's Church of England's presentations of 'Experiencing Lent, Easter and Remembrance.'

- During school Masses, pupils undertake active roles as, for example, readers and altar servers

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education is outstanding. It is consistently effective in ensuring that pupils are interested, engaged and make very good progress.
- Most teachers plan very well and display very good subject knowledge. They all have a suitable qualification in Religious Education.
- Adults all work hard in the classroom and are great role models for the children to emulate. They typically depict the Gospel values of compassion, tolerance, forgiveness and patience.
- A range of teaching styles, accelerated learning techniques and thinking skills are deployed to motivate pupils and enable them to access the curriculum.
- Teaching encourages pupils' enjoyment of and enthusiasm for Religious Education. On the day of inspection very young children excitedly shared a role play of the Christmas story with their peers and were able to recognise all the characters and, with a few prompts, to retell the story.
- Teachers take into account pupils' prior learning and consistently ensure tasks are differentiated so that the work consolidates, builds and extends their knowledge. It is important that the higher achievers are more consistently challenged by differentiated tasks and questions.
- Key words are introduced, reiterated and displayed to enhance the children's religious vocabulary.
- Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively.
- They have high expectations of the pupils they teach in terms of attitude and behaviour.
- Very good use is made of time and resources including other adults and Information and Communication Technology to maximise learning.
- Pupils' contributions are valued and appreciated. Adults consistently affirm and praise pupils for good answers and appropriate behaviour.
- Effort and achievement are celebrated through marking and verbal encouragement. Displays are used to reinforce learning. Marking, in general, could be a little more developmental and indicate the next steps for learning.
- The assessment of pupils' work in Religious Education is outstanding. Formal assessment tasks are moderated consistently to ensure levelling is accurate. Most teachers use their informal assessments very well to inform future planning.
- The school has excellent assessment strategies which provide detailed information on the achievement of all the pupils. Teachers track individual progress and enter data onto school tracking sheets which are used effectively to identify areas of development for individuals and groups of pupils. They are thus able to identify how well pupils are achieving and tackle underachievement.
- Teachers enable pupils to evaluate their own work.

The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils' learning

- The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning is good. It meets all pupils' needs very well.
- Using the *Come and See* programme recommended by the Archdiocese, the school meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory. Appropriate

levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets National and Archdiocesan requirements.

- Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. Timings of lessons need to continue to be monitored carefully.
- All members of staff have embraced the new Religious Education Programme, *Come and See* with enthusiasm. They are committed to delivering it in a way that engages the pupils.
- On the whole, planning ensures full coverage of the Religious Education programme. Imaginative and well planned strategies are deployed to enrich pupils' learning. Careful monitoring should ensure that all staff members plan the whole topic before starting it to ensure appropriate links can be made between the children's life experience and the Christian understanding of the topic.
- 'I Can' statements are used for the older children to assess their own work. Teachers could use these to indicate the next steps for learning more consistently.
- The school implements new curriculum developments as appropriate and purchases suitable resources in support.
- The Religious Education curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral development and vocation.
- Enrichment activities such as the International Curriculum and Children's University promote respect for the gifts and talents of each individual and help to raise self esteem.
- The children have enjoyed inspirational talks from recent Olympians including an ex-pupil. These sessions help to raise aspirations.
- Children have explored the beliefs and values of the Jewish faith and Hindu religion. This helps to promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently. They thoroughly enjoyed the visitors who shared their beliefs and values with them.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

- The Collective Worship provided is outstanding in reflecting the Catholic character of the school. It has a high profile and is an important part of the life of the school in celebrating life and learning.
- An excellent, comprehensive policy and guidelines for delivery have been produced that emanate from the Mission Statement and indicate the importance of keeping Christian values at the heart of everything.
- The co-ordinator has put together a useful, flexible timetable for Collective Worship themes throughout the year which relates to significant times of the Church's year etc.
- In accordance with development plans, training in planning, leading and evaluating Collective Worship was provided recently. This had a significant impact on the role of pupils in planning and leading worship in an age appropriate manner and on the quality of Collective Worship throughout the school.
- The head teacher monitors the quality of provision informally as he joins classes across the school for Collective Worship. The Religious Education Co-ordinator monitors worship more formally and gives appropriate feedback.
- She ensures that suitable, modern resources have been purchased and are used effectively.
- Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils. It is further enhanced through circle time and the use of the SEAL programme.

- Prayer and Liturgy are used effectively as a source of inspiration to help pupils and staff members reflect upon their lives and mission.
- Opportunities are provided to enable full, active and conscious participation of the whole school community.
- Children are enabled to pray formally and informally using a variety of prayer methods and styles. Wonderful examples of spontaneous prayer were evident on the day of inspection.
- Adults create a prayerful atmosphere and are excellent role models for the children.
- The teachers provide essential resources and opportunities to help children to develop the skills necessary to plan, lead and participate in Collective Worship and to evaluate it very effectively. They should monitor the impact of child-led worship to ensure themes are clear and a suitable atmosphere is maintained throughout.
- Many opportunities are provided for parents, carers and the local and wider Faith communities to participate in a variety of celebrations of the *Come and See* programme and the Church's liturgical year.
- The parish priest celebrates Mass with the school community on feast days and during Lent and with the three schools within the parish on other occasions. Pupils are enabled to take active roles as, for example, readers and altar servers.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in promoting and developing the Catholic Life of the school. They are wholly committed and show an excellent understanding of and commitment to, the Mission of the Church.
- This is reflected in the school's own Mission Statement. All who form part of the school community including parents, priest, governors and children were involved in the development and annual review of the Mission Statement. Its aims and practical objectives direct and guide every aspect of school life and are a useful tool by which the school evaluates its effectiveness. It is displayed throughout the school and used on documentation. Every family receives a postcard sized depiction of the statement, as displayed in the entrance, to share and reinforce its sentiments.
- Opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in Catholic life and Mission of the school. They truly know, own and live out their Mission Statement as they value everyone as unique individuals and ensure school is a place of positive learning and growing.
- The school aims to provide, a secure, safe environment that allows children to grow and develop into confident people and accomplished learners.
- Leaders, governors and managers use the monitoring data available well to evaluate the school's performance, celebrate achievement, and plan future improvements.
- The Self Evaluation Document is updated annually and provides evidence of the school's rigorous monitoring, careful analysis and self challenge. It is a comprehensive document which gives an accurate picture of the Catholic Life and work of the school. The analysis provides a basis to celebrate the school's strengths and outlines areas for development.
- The school provides excellent induction and in-service training to enable staff members to further understand the Church's mission in education and to play their unique parts in it. In-service sessions at LACE are regularly attended and Religious Education features on the staff meeting agenda on a regular basis.

- All teachers have a suitable qualification in Religious Education and some teaching assistants have undertaken modules of the Catholic Certificate in Religious Education.
- The quality of Collective Worship is a priority for the school. It is monitored and evaluated by leaders and managers. An excellent, up to date policy and guidelines for its implementation are in place to give staff clear direction.
- A range of opportunities for spiritual developments are provided for staff and pupils, such as the discussion and debating experiences through the Children's University, the International Primary Curriculum and through visits which encourage learning outside the classroom. These are good opportunities for developing a wider perspective on life and for reflection.
- The school's policy for moral development highlights how the Gospel values of freedom, justice and love permeate every aspect of life and the Code of Conduct promotes good attitudes e.g. manners, respect and trust.
- Matters of social justice are given high importance with many examples of awareness and fund raising for a variety of good causes e.g. CAFOD World Gifts.
- Excellent support is provided for vulnerable pupils by the school's Learning Mentor to help them to develop self esteem and enhance their well-being.
- Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all. Funding is made available to invite visitors of other faiths and religions into school to share their faith and help to foster positive attitudes and respect for the beliefs of others.
- There are positive relationships at every level within the school and within the parish community.
- The school supports the Archdiocesan sacramental preparation programme, 'With You Always' very well and works in partnership with the parents and carers of the three schools within the parish of St. John Vianney .
- Parents are consulted regularly and involved in a variety of ways in the life of the school. They are kept well-informed through weekly newsletters.
- Governors fulfil their responsibilities in an outstanding manner. They are fully committed and kept well-informed about the Catholic Life of the school. They have effectively helped to shape the direction of the school through their high profile in the school and through the monitoring exercises they undertake. They regularly attend whole school celebrations, Acts of Worship and special liturgies throughout the year. They undertake training as appropriate and the chair of Governors is currently undergoing training and receiving support from the National College for School Leadership to enable her to fulfil her pivotal role even more effectively.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Religious Education of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in the way they promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and in how they plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.
- Religious Education is at the core of the curriculum in St. Mark's School.
- Governors ensure that 10% quality time is dedicated to the teaching the subject.
- The subject action plan feeds into the Self Evaluation Document and is monitored closely by leaders, governors and managers. This ensures that Religious Education is given a high priority in the life of the school.
- A robust programme for the monitoring and evaluation cycle is in place which evaluates the school's performance and plans for future improvements.

- Teaching and learning is monitored and appropriate feedback and support given as necessary. Good practice is celebrated.
- Continuing professional development opportunities are provided for all and additional support given to new or inexperienced staff members.
- Formal assessment tasks are meticulously undertaken in line with Archdiocesan guidance. Staff members are secure and skilled in their levelling of work.
- Assessment information is collated and tracked by the subject leader and shared with the senior leadership team and governors. Underachievement is identified.
- The subject leader is outstanding in guiding Religious Education. She shows great commitment and enthusiasm. Archdiocesan training and briefing sessions are regularly attended and new initiatives introduced when appropriate. Excellent documentation guides and directs all staff in the delivery of the subject. This is updated as necessary. The co-ordinator provides great support to colleagues as required in a very positive, cheerful manner. The headteacher gives her the utmost support and encouragement.
- Governors are kept well-informed by the co-ordinator and head teacher. They are interested and proactively involved as link governors. They hold an annual Policy Update meeting to formally review and adopt relevant policies and have monitoring files which are updated termly with pupils' work.
- The Parish Priest is a regular visitor to the school and has significantly enhanced the curriculum in many ways. Recently, he shared experiences of Baptism and of how he fulfils his vocation to the priesthood with the children.
- Newsletters are provided for parents and carers each term that outline the curriculum and indicate how they can help to support their child's learning in Religious Education. They are consulted on different issues depending on the topic being covered.
- Parents receive an annual report on progress and are kept further informed through verbal reports on Parents' Evenings. Written reports are very informative and share attainment and achievement with parents.
- Achievement and effort are celebrated especially at the end of week assemblies which are much enjoyed by the pupils.

What the school needs to do to improve further:

- Raise attainment further by:
 - using driver words from the Levels of Attainment consistently to challenge the higher achievers;
 - ensuring all teachers plan the whole topic before teaching it to make certain they clearly understand how the children's lived experiences are related to the Christian understanding of the topic;
 - making sure children consistently take a leading role in selecting material to celebrate their new learning in the REJOICE part of the learning process.
- Rationalise the Self Evaluation process by:
 - making it clear how provision impacts on outcomes;
 - monitoring the Self Evaluation Document alongside the action plan for the subject.

- Continue to implement the areas for development identified in the school's own self-evaluation document. These include:
 - further developing differentiation of tasks within *Come and See* and monitor this through observations and scrutiny of planning and pupils' work;
 - enhance and develop planning of *Come and See*.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	1
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OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	2
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education	1
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning	2
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	1

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders, governors and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1

<i>Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 requires improvement and grade 4 inadequate</i>
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