



## ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

### INSPECTION REPORT

### ST. MARIE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

### KIRKBY

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Tuesday 28 April 2009

Inspectors Mrs. Marie Connolly Mrs. Denise Hegarty

URN 104466

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Catholic Primary
Age range of pupils	3-11
Number on roll	206 (Including nursery)
Chair of Governors	Mr. William Mushrow
School address	Bigdale Drive, Northwood, Kirkby. Liverpool L33 6XL.
Telephone number	0151 477 8480
E-mail address	<a href="mailto:stmaries.de@knowsley.gov.uk">stmaries.de@knowsley.gov.uk</a>
Date of last inspection	April 2006
Head teacher	Mrs. Pat Cooney

## **Introduction**

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2006.

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.

## **Description of the school**

St. Marie's is an average size Catholic Primary School serving the parish of St. Marie's Kirkby. The school is situated in Northwood, Kirkby an area of some significant social and economic disadvantage. There are currently 206 children on roll (including Nursery). 205 children are baptised Catholics and 24 come from other Christian denominations. There are no children attending from other religious traditions. Eight of the 9 teachers in the school teach Religious Education. Eight are Catholic, 7 have a Religious Education qualification.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

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## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

St. Marie's is an outstanding Catholic school. It is an inclusive community, underpinned by an exceptionally strong Catholic ethos, which establishes a positive climate for work. The gospel values of love, care and respect very evidently underpin every aspect of school life. This is a school where the well being of every child is of paramount importance to the dedicated and hard working staff. As the Mission Statement states each person is encouraged to develop his or her full potential in celebration of their God given uniqueness. Displays and areas all around the school show how excellence and enjoyment are part of every school activity whilst also nurturing children's spiritual and moral development. Excellent relationships exist at every level. Staff show through their care and concern both for the children and each other that the 'Catholic ethos' is a tangible, living thing. All are made welcome. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Learners achieve well consistently and make outstanding progress throughout the school. Overall, teaching and learning is outstanding. Assessment is providing clear guidance on learning. The curriculum is well planned. Learners' behaviour is exemplary. The Religious Education curriculum meets well the needs and interests of learners, enabling them to make meaningful connections between life and faith. The provision for learners' spiritual and moral development is outstanding. Both curriculum Religious Education and Collective Worship make a significant contribution to this development. Creative and imaginative strategies have been employed to enable this to happen formally and informally. The Religious Education coordinator, supported by the headteacher is exemplary in the manner in which he leads and manages Religious Education. Both understand the areas where there is outstanding practice but are realistic in appreciating the hard work and effort that enables such high achievement and standards to be maintained and developed further. There is whole school commitment to this ongoing development. The Collective Worship is outstanding and contains deeply reflective and uplifting elements. The school is outstanding in promoting community cohesion. This is most evident in the manner in which the school serves the parish and local community.

**Grade: 1**

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

The school was previously judged as outstanding. Since then it has not only maintained the areas of excellence it has developed further. This outstanding improvement is the result of committed team work and people sharing a common vision. The school sets itself targets in order to maintain outstanding standards and meet fresh challenges. Any new initiatives introduced by the Archdiocese are acted upon promptly and rigorously. The school is very willing to support the Archdiocese in sharing excellent practice.

**Grade: 1**

## **Capacity to improve**

The school's self-evaluation is good. The judgements made in the document mostly match but the judgements made in this report. Some statements are made with little written evidence. An abundance of evidence, however, was found during the day of inspection. The school needs to be more explicit in identifying these and the strategies it intends to employ in order to improve further. Parents and governors are aware of and greatly appreciate the outstanding work being undertaken and the dedicated leadership that directs and guides every aspect of school life. The Religious Education coordinator has a clear vision of what and how to improve and openness to new challenges. There is outstanding capacity for further improvement as shown by the shared commitment to Religious Education and related whole school issues by all.

**Grade: 1**

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

The school needs to identify clearly in its own school development plan and self-evaluation document evidence of its' strengths and any areas for ongoing development with the strategies that will be used to address them. Any minor issues contained in the body of the report, and any new initiatives introduced by the Archdiocese should be included when appropriate.

## **Achievement and standards**

Learners' attainment on entry to the school is generally well below that expected. Learners make outstanding progress in the school. This is greatly enabled by the excellent start in Foundation phase. Standards in Religious Education overall are outstanding, with most learners meeting learning objectives and outcomes set, according to their age and stage of development. There is no difference in performance by learners of different gender. Learners with special needs make outstanding progress in Religious Education with the extensive support provided by teaching assistants and extensive differentiation of tasks to meet their needs. Personalised learning has been instrumental in raising standards even further. The school checks on the progress made by all through assessment and some positive but thought provoking marking. Children show a developing confidence in discussion and feedback, and a real knowledge and understanding of the subject and its relevance in their lives. All children show enthusiasm and excitement for the subject and when undertaking their work. Standards will continue to rise and further progress be made by the ongoing use of the information gathered through the monitoring of planning, teaching and learning and scrutiny of the formal assessments made each term. The school has also identified the continuing moderation of samples of work across the school as another way of further raising standards. The behaviour of children throughout the school is outstanding. The children are enabled to make

an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community through initiatives such as the school council and mentoring programme which allows the children's 'voice' to be taken into consideration. The children have also had some input into recent appointments.

**Grade: 1**

## **Quality of Provision for Religious Education**

### **Teaching and learning**

Overall, the quality of provision for Religious Education is outstanding. A significant amount of the teaching observed and evidence in some workbooks show much teaching and learning is outstanding, some good. Teachers show a real enthusiasm for the subject. The learning needs of all children, including those with additional needs, are addressed through the use of some highly creative and imaginative teaching and learning strategies, extensive differentiation of tasks and by outstanding additional support provided by excellent teaching assistants and others. Teachers should indicate when planning which tasks are to be assessed. Sharing outstanding practice through the monitoring process enables teachers to share where excellence in practice has been identified and will enable ongoing development. Teaching is very creative. This helps learners engage with the material presented and thoroughly enjoy their lessons. Some excellent use is being made of information communication technology. This is helping to enliven the material being presented. Well prepared resources significantly enhanced the delivery of lessons. Teachers and assistants provide a most creative and stimulating environment which supports and challenges all children. This is exemplary.

Good planning and a clear understanding of the Religious Education programme direct and guide all staff. Ongoing monitoring of planning, workbooks and lesson observations will ensure even greater consistency across the school. The lessons observed had good pace and timing, which maintained the interest and concentration of learners and kept them on task and focussed. Work is provided that enables learners to work well independently and collaboratively. All teachers ensure that learners understand the purpose of the lesson by sharing the learning objective at the start of the lesson and then re-visiting it during the plenary session. Learners' religious literacy will be enhanced by the identification and use of the key words for each topic particularly during the Relate stage of the process. Formal assessment procedures have been introduced that show clearly what progress is being made and that learners are meeting the expectations in Religious Education. This information directs future planning. The school has identified moderation of children's work as an area for further improvement. This will ensure consistency in the levelling of work. Use of the driver words for each level is helping focus teaching more clearly on the expected outcome.

Parents and carers involvement in the children's Religious Education is outstanding. Parents and carers are enabled to become involved in their children's Religious Education by the provision of regular detailed

newsletters which are provided for each year group, and curriculum meetings informing them of what is to be covered. Parents also benefit from being invited to school for twice yearly parent/child reviews. Beautiful displays and focus areas in the school related to the children's work in Religious Education are another way of sharing the Catholic life of the school with parents and visitors.

## **Grade: 1**

### **Curriculum**

The Religious Education curriculum is outstanding in meeting the needs and interests of learners. The school, using the *Here I Am* programme recommended by the Archdiocese, meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. A whole school approach is used and appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets national and diocesan requirements. Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. The leadership of the school ensures suitable positioning of Religious Education on timetables. Curriculum outlines are provided for parents. Parents are consulted on different issues depending on the topic being covered.

Catholic beliefs and values are at the heart of learners' spiritual and moral development. There is evidence of this in every classroom and all around the school. It is very evident in the care that has been shown in creating the whole learning environment appealing to all the senses. Beautiful displays, quiet areas for prayer and reflection (that take the liturgical seasons colours into consideration), posters and photographs provide evidence of this excellent practice. Overall the Religious Education curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to learners' spiritual and moral development. Children have a good sense of right and wrong. The school is constantly introducing pro-active initiatives to encourage the positive behaviour and moral development of all e.g. evidence on display of a balanced debate concerning whether children should own mobile phones, use of SEAL materials etc.

The school also provides outstanding opportunities for spiritual development. Teachers make the curriculum challenging and relevant by creating some stimulating resources. Children have an exceptionally good understanding of the life and teaching of Jesus and during this year of St. Paul have made links with what Paul says in relation to this development. Many creative strategies, including those using information communication technology are used to enable them apply this teaching to their own lives. e.g. drama, role play, and other cross-curricular links with music, art, dance, technology etc. Some work has been undertaken on *Other Faiths* has helped the children understand how others make sense of the world in which we live and also promotes tolerance and respect for those whose views differ from our own. Inviting visitors from other religious traditions to share their different beliefs and cultural differences will enable children make greater sense

of the diversity experienced in living in Britain today. Visits to other religious places of worship will also support this development.

The children visit the parish church to support both curriculum Religious Education and also their spiritual development.

**Grade: 1**

## **Leadership and Management**

### **Religious Education**

Leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education are outstanding. There is a clear vision for the subject within the mission of the school with a focus on raising standards even further. The Religious Education coordinator supported by the headteacher provide outstanding leadership and effective and efficient support to all staff. The coordinator shows enthusiasm, flair and commitment. Excellent documentation guides and directs all staff in their delivery of the subject. There is also excellent evidence of the quality of practice and achievement in Religious Education and associated whole school issues. Documentation is updated as necessary. Coordinators' meetings are attended regularly and information is disseminated to all staff during staff meetings or in-service time. A rolling programme enabling all teaching staff to attend Archdiocesan in-service supports them further in their planning and delivery of the subject and deepens their understanding of the underlying theology. Performance in Religious Education is monitored. A rolling programme is in place to ensure all staff have their work observed. Feedback and support is provided. This ongoing scrutiny of planning, workbooks and teaching and learning and effective use of the findings will enable even greater consistency and raise standards even further. Self-assessment is undertaken for each topic by staff and learners.

St. Marie's is socially inclusive by providing equality of access and of opportunity for all learners to make progress. Pastoral care is a real strength of the school. Excellent support is given to those children with additional learning needs. Of the 9 staff, 8 teach Religious Education. 8 are Catholic. 7 have a suitable qualification. Priorities for the subject are identified and targets set. Funding for Religious Education is very good. Resources have been purchased or created by members of staff and are deployed to achieve exceptionally high standards. The school is making some excellent use of interactive white boards, and other technology in Religious Education and Collective Worship e.g. a lit candle image, and colour background to reinforce the topic. Use of other technology will further enhance provision e.g. recording with the flip video or didgi-blue cameras. Excellent use is made of display and photographic evidence that is annotated in portfolios and all around the school. This is of a very high quality. The Religious Education subject leader and headteacher

keep the governors informed on matters relating to Religious Education. Governors discharge their responsibilities most effectively.

**Grade: 1**

### **Catholic Life of the School**

The leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school through the Mission Statement are outstanding. It is a community that believes and lives its mission. St. Marie's is a highly inclusive community in which the gospel spirit of love, care and mutual respect permeates every aspect of its life and work. Excellent relationships are at the heart of every activity. Enthusiasm and commitment permeates the school.

The Mission Statement and motto is displayed as you enter the school, in classrooms, documents and other places around the school. Its aims and objectives direct and guide every aspect of school life. It is reviewed regularly by all who form the school community and has undertaken a major review over the last twelve months when the motto 'Love, learn, achieve' was agreed. This 'child friendly' statement enables it to be known and owned by all. St. Marie's is a real community reaching out to the local and wider community. It aspires to achieve the best for all. At the next review of the Mission Statement it would be good to acknowledge in the statement itself the school's philosophy regarding the community.

**Grade: 1**

### **Collective Worship**

The quality of opportunities and experiences offered for Collective Worship are outstanding. The school provides Collective Worship in a variety of ways for each child daily, in class, and whole school gatherings. This fulfils government and Archdiocesan guidance. Guidelines that support the planning and delivery of Collective Worship wherever and whenever it takes place have been produced including a simple format for planning. Collective Worship stimulates reflection on spiritual and moral issues and on personal beliefs. A beautiful focus for worship is provided in each classroom using suitable religious objects and artefacts. They generally support the work displayed for the topic on an area of wall space. These are of a high quality and reflect the liturgical season beautifully. Other resources are stored centrally e.g. suitable materials, books and artefacts to support teachers in their delivery of Collective Worship. Focus tables are used effectively for both Collective Worship and also during lessons. Children are encouraged to participate in a meaningful manner both in class and larger gatherings through prayer, poetry, song, dance mime etc. This enriches their experience. A group of children were preparing a dance to accompany the hymn 'Here I Am, Lord' to enrich the children's First Holy Communion celebration. This provides evidence of children's desire to support each other and the community spirit so evident at St. Marie's. All teachers ensure time is given to individual reflection during Collective Worship and help children develop skills which enhance this. Creativity

is used to support learners' ongoing spiritual and moral development during acts of Collective Worship e.g. use of different types of prayer, music and symbol. The manner in which this was undertaken on the day of inspection was gentle and reverent. Liturgical celebrations are planned and these take place throughout the year. Mass is sometimes celebrated. Parents, governors and friends of the school community are invited to a variety of assemblies and services. This is greatly appreciated. Collective Worship is monitored and evaluated informally. This identifies areas of excellence in practice is shared, and helps raise the standard of worship throughout the school.

**Grade: 1**

## **Community Cohesion**

The school is outstanding in promoting community cohesion. The leadership of the school is clearly dedicated to enabling this to happen. There is a shared vision and commitment to serve the common good. Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities. Parents, carers and children are involved in the decision making and life of the school e.g. development of the Mission Statement. The school continues to identify and develop strategies for strengthening community links even further e.g. working in partnership with the extended school facility on the school site.

Collective Worship celebrates, reflects and respects the diversity within the school. The use of the Religious Education Programme, *Here I Am*, supports well community cohesion. Good use is made of materials provided by CAFOD. Learners have explored the beliefs and values of other faiths. This helps promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently. Greater evidence of the work undertaken needs to be made evident. It would be good for the school to invite speakers from other religious backgrounds into school and also to arrange visits when possible to places of worship e.g. the synagogue, to enable children to further deepen their knowledge and understanding of these communities. The school has a clear sense of its mission in reaching out to those who are less fortunate supporting a variety of local, national and international charities both by becoming better informed and by raising funds and resources e.g. CAFOD, NSPCC, Nugent Care, the Blind Society to name but a few. The children also perform a carol concert for the pensioners in a local residential home. The local authority Family learning team work on site to engage the most vulnerable families in their children's learning and supporting parent's life-long learning. This is excellent.

**Grade: 1**