



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC INFANT SCHOOL

NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS

Tuesday 10 February 2009

Inspectors Rev. D. Melly Mrs. M. McGarry

URN 104817

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic Infant
Age range of pupils	3-7
Number on roll	178
Chair of Governors	Mrs. P. Kruger (Acting)
School address	Victoria Road, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside, WA12 9RX.
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Date of last inspection	2 May 2006
Headteacher	Mrs. C. Ryding

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

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. Mary's School is an average sized infant school. It is situated in Newton-le-Willows and is part of the St. Helens Local Authority. The catchment area is one of average socio-economic advantage. There are 178 learners on role of whom 154 are baptised Catholics, 18 come from other Christian denominations. There are 6 children not baptised and no children from *Other Faith* traditions. The number of learners eligible for free school meals is below the national average as is the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are 11 members of teaching staff 8 of whom are Catholic. There are also 3 full-time and 9 part-time learning assistants, 10 of whom are Catholic.

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. Mary's is a good Catholic school with many outstanding features. It is a welcoming community who share the gospel values of love, respect and equality and where all are enabled to achieve their potential, working in partnership with the homes and the parish. A very strong Catholic ethos is certainly evident in the bright, stimulating, caring and secure learning environment, which has been created for work. Good relationships have obviously been established by working closely with home, parish and the local and global community. All are valued, respected, cared for and affirmed. Standards are good. Learners achieve well and make good progress. Teaching is good overall. Assessment is in place and is being well developed. The curriculum planning is good and results in an effective delivery of the *Here I Am* programme. Learners' behaviour is good. The Religious Education programme, Collective Worship and the Catholic life of the school make a good contribution to the learners' spiritual and moral development. The school is outstanding in promoting community cohesion. The headteacher and senior management team have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and a vision of how to meet development needs.

Grade: 2

Improvement since the last inspection

Following the last Section 23 Inspection in May 2006 the school has taken effective steps to address the issue highlighted in the last report. Monitoring of planning is now in place to ensure all aspects of the *Here I Am* programme are implemented. An in-service day was held focussing on spiritual and moral development and Collective Worship. Planners and information produced by the Department for Christian Education team have been disseminated to staff.

Grade: 1

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and comprehensive though at times modest. The priorities for both the improvement of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school stem from the self-evaluation and the school development plan. The leadership has a clear understanding of what needs to be developed and is committed to improvement. There is outstanding capacity and enthusiasm for further improvement.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement the targets set out in the school self-evaluation document and development plan.

Achievement and standards

Learners make good progress in the school and by Year 2 meet the expectations of the *Here I Am* programme. Standards in Religious Education overall are good. There are no significant differences in performance by learners of different gender. Learners with special needs make good progress in Religious Education with the provision of differing tasks and the help provided by the teachers and learning support assistants. The school checks on the progress made by all through assessment and this is good. Learners' work is always marked, sometimes with constructive comments that affirm and support the learning process. Learners are very confident and articulate in discussion and are not afraid to ask questions which show good knowledge and understanding of Religious Education. Learners are given opportunities to record their knowledge and understanding and express their own thoughts and feelings in a variety of styles. Photographic evidence of work covered is a strength of the school.

The school celebrates achievements in lessons and assemblies. Children throughout the school are confident and obviously enjoy work. They are obviously very happy to be in school. They have a growing understanding of the life and teaching of Jesus and his Church and are able to apply this to their own lives and experiences. Learners' behaviour is good overall. They have a very good sense of right and wrong. The Gospel values of love, respect and equality underpin the provision for learners' moral development enabling learners to make a good contribution to the school community. Teachers and learners show genuine care, concern and respect for each other. All are extremely polite and helpful.

Grade: 2

Quality of Provision for Religious Education

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good overall with three examples of outstanding teaching being observed. All teachers are secure in their knowledge and understanding of the *Here I Am* programme and this is reflected in their planning and confident delivery of the topics. *Here I Am* is very well used. Some very good use is made of the smart boards with pictures from *Church's Story*, *God's Story* and photos of the children themselves being displayed. This captivates the learners' attention. There is some outstanding use of role play. Talking partners and collaborative working were also used to good effect. Hymns relevant to the topics and backed by CD music and percussion provided by the children were also used to draw lessons together. All learners are challenged and respond positively. They are quick to get on task and remain focussed. Children's behaviour and relationships are good in most lessons. Learners are obviously valued in class. They are listened to and treated with respect not just by the teachers and support staff but also by their peers. The children are obviously extremely happy in school. The tasks

observed on the day were challenging, interesting and differentiated, catering well for the wide spectrum of learning abilities in the school. Because of this approach the children are able to learn and make good progress. Monitoring of teaching and learning through observation of planning and learners' workbooks is in place and is good. Very effective use is made of teaching assistants and other adults to support learning and inclusion. The learning objective is shared at the beginning of most lessons. This ensures that the sharp focus of the lesson is adhered to and the work recommended in the *Here I Am* programme is covered. Learners' work is always marked, sometimes with comments that are affirming and encouraging. The work is formally assessed once a term, following the directions of the Department for Christian Education. This is good.

Parents and carers are enabled to become involved in their children's Religious Education in a variety of ways. Attractive newsletters are regularly sent to the homes, the parish and the junior and high schools. Special newsletters, outlining the religious elements of the curriculum, are also sent to the homes. Parents are also invited to open evenings and to attend school assemblies and special celebrations. The school also reports comprehensively on progress in Religious Education. Replies to the parents' questionnaire show that parents are appreciative of the work of the school: some very encouraging and supportive comments were added to the questionnaires by some parents who belong to the Catholic faith and others who do not.

Grade: 2

Curriculum

The school is effective in meeting the Religious Education curriculum needs and interests of learners. Through using the *Here I Am* programme recommended by the Archdiocese the school 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 at least 10% is allocated to Religious Education, which is a requirement of the Bishops of England and Wales. The Religious Education curriculum makes a good impact on learners' spiritual and moral development enabling them above all to be self-reflective.

Grade: 2

Leadership and Management

Religious Education

The leadership and management in Religious Education are outstanding. There is a clear vision for the subject within the mission of the school, which is shared by all and is reflected in the very positive relationships throughout the school. The Headteacher and the Religious Education coordinators are extremely committed to the cause of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school. They are making an excellent contribution in leading and supporting staff and they have a clear vision for the further development of the school. The Religious Education coordinators are obviously very enthusiastic and conscientious about their role. A very good handbook guides and directs all staff in their delivery of Religious Education. Monitoring through scrutiny of planning, teaching and workbooks is in place and is good. The process of assessment recommended by the Department for Christian Education is in place and is being well developed. All permanent staff teaching Religious Education have a suitable qualification. Teaching assistants are very effectively deployed. The coordinators take turns in attending coordinators' meetings and information is disseminated to all staff during staff meetings. All staff are now given an opportunity to attend courses provided by the Department for Christian Education. Priorities for the subject are clearly identified and targets set. Religious Education is well funded and money has obviously been well spent. Governors, many of whom are new to the job, are very keen to discharge their responsibilities effectively and avail of all training on offer. The school would like to involve governors more in the life of the school and especially Religious Education.

Grade: 1

Catholic Life of the School

There is outstanding leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school through the Mission Statement. St. Mary's is a welcoming community who share and encourage the Gospel values of love, respect and equality in all aspects of its life and work. The learners are obviously valued, affirmed and respected. This helps them to be confident and happy. The Mission Statement is outstanding: we learn, we love, we follow Jesus. This has been put into a song which greatly helps the children with their understanding of it. Aims, flowing from the Mission Statement, with practical objectives showing how these are to be achieved are also in place.

Grade: 1

Collective Worship

The quality of Collective Worship is good. The school provides Collective Worship in a variety of ways for each child daily, in class or whole school gatherings. This fulfils government and Archdiocesan guidance. A very good

policy and guidelines to support the planning, delivery and nurturing of Collective Worship is in place. Acts of worship included music and song together with appropriate focuses to create a prayerful atmosphere. There was good use of prayer both formal and informal: a prayerful atmosphere pervaded throughout. There were opportunities for stillness and reflection on behaviour which makes other people and themselves happy. These were very well used. Both acts of Collective Worship laid a firm liturgical foundation for the children. The learners present responded well to the warm and affirming worship experience. Focus tables and displays in each classroom are colourful, attractive and well presented, expressing well the topic of *Communion*. This enhances the delivery of the curriculum and Collective Worship. Collective Worship makes a good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the children.

Grade: 2

Community Cohesion

The school's leadership and management in promoting community cohesion are outstanding. There is a shared vision and commitment to serve the common good. Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all. It is obvious that every person matters in this school particularly those who are disadvantaged. Collective Worship celebrates, reflects and respects the diversity of belief within the school. The use of the Religious Education programme, *Here I Am*, supports community cohesion. It is hoped that this work will be developed in the future by inviting people from other faiths into the school to talk to the children and share experiences. Learners have explored the beliefs and values of Judaism and Islam. The multicultural week which takes place in the summer term each year is a highlight of the life of the school. The school is very involved in the life of the local community, particularly the Children's Centre, the Rangers, the Fire Station, the school nurse. Members of the Legion of Mary come into school from the parish once a month to help children with the praying of the rosary and all enjoy this. All show a concern for the well being of those less fortunate than themselves in their very generous support of CAFOD, Nugent Care, Comic Relief, Breast Cancer Research, Mission Together, HCPT and The Adam Sandell's Appeal.

Grade 1