



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST AUSTIN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ST HELENS

Tuesday 16^h June 2009

Inspectors Ms Nora Finnegan Ms Julie Mosinski

URN 104806

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic Primary
Age range of pupils	3 -11
Number on roll	206
Chair of Governors	Mr Brian Bielby
School address	Heath Street, St Helens Merseyside. WA9 5NJ
Telephone number	01744 606598
E-mail address	Patsy.wade@sthelens.org.uk
Date of last inspection	28 th February 2006
Headteacher	Mrs Patsy Wade

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 Austin's is an average sized Catholic Primary School which serves the local parish of the same name. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is above average. A smaller than average number of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all children are of White British heritage.

Children enter the school with skills that are below average for their age. There are 206 children on roll of whom 185 are baptised Catholics and 9 come from another Christian denomination. Twelve children have no specified religious affiliation. There are no children from an *Other Faith* tradition. There are 11 members of staff, 9 of whom are Catholic. Eight of the 9 teachers who teach Religious Education 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 Austin's is an outstanding Catholic Primary school. It is a vibrant inclusive community where everyone's gifts and talents are developed "within the context of the Catholic ethos, whilst nurturing a respect and understanding of other cultures and beliefs". It is very obviously a place where the values of Jesus, especially "mutual respect, tolerance and forgiveness" are lived out. This encourages children and staff to give of their best and establishes a very positive climate for work.

Positive relationships have been established by working in genuine partnership with home, parish and the local community. Standards are outstanding. Learners achieve well and make outstanding progress. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Assessment is outstanding and provides clear guidance on learning. Through its use of creative teaching and learning strategies the school is outstanding in meeting the Religious Education curriculum needs and interests of all learners. Children's behaviour is outstanding. They are also enabled to make an outstanding contribution to the school community.

The Religious Education subject leader provides outstanding leadership and support to staff. The leadership and management of the school are outstanding in developing the Catholic life of the school through the Mission Statement. This is evident through the headteacher's understanding of the mission of a Catholic school and her service to the community. The senior leadership are aware of the school's strengths and have a clear vision of how to meet developmental needs. The commitment of the governors enables them to discharge their responsibilities in an outstanding manner.

The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding. The provision for learners' spiritual and moral development is outstanding. Both curriculum Religious Education and Collective Worship make an outstanding contribution to this. The school is outstanding in promoting community cohesion. This is evident by the strong links fostered with the parish and both the local and wider community.

Grade: 1

Improvement since the last inspection

The school had two key issues from its last Section 48 Inspection in February 2006. Since then, all members of the school community have been involved in developing a new Mission Statement which is supported by clear aims and practical objectives. Information from monitoring and formal assessment of Religious Education has been analysed thoroughly by the senior management and the Religious Education coordinator and used very effectively to raise standards in the school. Developmental marking has been introduced. Delivery of Religious Education has been enriched by the introduction of more creative teaching and learning strategies and through use of challenging

questions and tasks. Resources have been updated. Time and finance have been provided to enable staff to attend in-service. Teachers' understanding of Here I Am topics and the new formal assessment procedures has been developed through sharing of information from Coordinators meetings and Topic days. In-service has been provided to support the on-going spiritual development of all staff. Documentation has been updated. Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school are evaluated on a regular basis.

Grade: 1

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is comprehensive and its view of its overall performance is mostly accurate. It is recommended that when updating the self-evaluation the school is more comprehensive in outlining the projected timescale of developmental strategies. The priorities for both the improvement of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school stem from the self-evaluation and will be influenced by the findings of this inspection. The leadership has a very clear understanding of what needs to be developed and is fully committed to improvement. There is outstanding capacity and eagerness 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 documentation.

Achievement and standards

Learners' attainment on entry to the school covers the full spectrum but, overall is below that expected nationally. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Most learners, in relation to their capability and starting points, make outstanding progress in the school. Standards in Religious Education are outstanding overall. There are no significant differences in performance by learners of different gender or ethnic background. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in Religious Education with the help provided by other adults and differentiation of tasks to meet their needs. Differentiation, through outstanding use of challenging questions and tasks, enables more able children in all classes to fulfil their potential. The school checks on the progress made by children through outstanding use of informal and formal assessment. Children's work is marked with positive challenging comments. The information gathered from formal assessment has been analysed by the Religious Education coordinator and the senior leadership team and used to

inform teaching. This has enabled the school to raise standards since the last inspection.

Children are very confident in discussion and feedback and have an outstanding knowledge of the subject and its relevance to their lives. They show real enthusiasm for Religious Education. The behaviour of children throughout the school is outstanding. Children are enabled to make an outstanding contribution to the school community e.g. the School Council awards to members of the school community, the Gardening Club improving the outdoor areas, Year 6 managing the school library etc.

Grade 1:

Quality of Provision for Religious Education

Teaching and learning

The evidence in planning, workbooks and formal assessment, together with the observation on the day of inspection, show that teaching and learning is outstanding overall. Lessons are very well planned taking account of the needs of different learners within the class. Teaching is very precise and clearly focussed on the learning objective. This enables the children to understand clearly what they are learning about. Teaching is confident and enthusiastic and lessons are very well paced. Use is made of a range of resources to challenge and stimulate the children. The learning needs of all children, including those who are more able, are addressed through outstanding use of creative teaching and learning strategies. Challenging, differentiated questions and tasks, together with good support for those less able, ensures that all children are enabled to make outstanding progress. The work given enables the children to work well independently and collaboratively. Learning is summed up very effectively during the plenary session and related to the objective. In many classes children are also given time to reflect at a deep level in order to relate their learning to their everyday lives.

It is recommended that use of self-assessment, seen in a few classes, is introduced throughout the school to enable learners to check on their own progress and celebrate their new knowledge and skills. Children's religious literacy is developed very well e.g. exploring what "consequences" and "reconciliation" mean. *Here I Am* displays are used very effectively to support teaching and learning. Outstanding use of formal assessment, through use of the tasks provided by the Archdiocese, is made. The information gathered has been analysed by the leadership team and the Religious Education coordinator and used to highlight what the school needed to do to improve standards further e.g. provision for more able children through challenging questioning and differentiated tasks.

Parents and carers involvement in their children's Religious Education is outstanding. They are sent a *Here I Am* newsletter each term which gives them detailed information about the topics being studied. When relevant, links are also made with homework e.g. children in Nursery taking home smiley faces to remind them to make choices which make others happy. Parents/carers are also invited to celebrations. They receive regular verbal and written reports of their child's progress. All of these enable parents/carers to become fully involved in their children's Religious Education.

Grade: 1

Curriculum

The school is outstanding in meeting the Religious Education curriculum needs and interests of learners through use of creative teaching and learning strategies. Those children who are less able are very well supported by other adults. Outstanding use of challenging questions and tasks is made in all classes to enable more able children fulfil their potential.

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. Ten per cent of total curriculum time is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. The leadership of the school ensures that quality time is given to the positioning of Religious Education on timetables. Children are given opportunity to apply their learning to their own lives e.g. "how I feel when I have made a wrong choice". The use of role play, hot-seating, music, information communication technology and other creative activities enrich the delivery of the Religious Education curriculum.

The Parish Priest makes an outstanding contribution to the Religious Education curriculum through supporting staff during topics and developing children's' understanding e.g. role play of Baptism and Marriage. The Religious Education curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to learners' spiritual and moral development. Children have a good sense of right and wrong and are given opportunities during topics to develop this e.g. how "the choices I make have consequences for me and other people". Policies to support spiritual and moral development are in place. These are very obviously lived out in the daily life of the school.

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 very clear vision for the subject within the mission of the school with a focus on raising standards. The Religious Education coordinator provides outstanding leadership for the staff who share a commitment to the subject's aims and values. She shows a genuine enthusiasm for her role and is fully committed to her task. All new initiatives introduced by the Archdiocese since the last inspection are fully in place. An excellent handbook guides and directs all staff in their delivery of Religious Education. Coordinators' meetings and Topic days are attended on a regular basis and information is disseminated to all staff during staff meetings or in-service time. Staff are also given opportunity, on a rota basis, to attend Topic days.

Performance in Religious Education is monitored, by the Religious Education coordinator and the senior leadership team, through observation of teaching and learning, scrutiny of planning, workbooks and displays. Formal assessment is analysed to ensure that the information gathered is used effectively to further improve teaching and ensure that the needs of all children are met. This enables the school to share good practice and raise standards. St Austin's is socially inclusive by providing equality of access and of opportunity for all learners to make progress. Of the 9 staff teaching Religious Education 8 have a suitable qualification. Support staff are planned for and are very involved in supporting teaching and learning during lessons. Priorities for the subject are clearly identified and targets set. Religious Education is funded on par with other core subjects and resources have been updated since the last inspection. The Religious Education coordinator meets each term with the governor who has responsibility for the subject to keep her fully informed of the strengths and areas for development. This information is then fed back to the full governing body enabling them to discharge their responsibilities in an outstanding manner.

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. Since the last inspection all members of the school community have gathered together to develop a new Mission statement. "Growing in faith together" ensures that the mission of the school, to live out the values of Jesus and develop the potential of all its members as holistic human beings, whilst working in partnership with the home, parish and wider community is known and owned by all. The statement is supported by clear aims and practical objectives which show how

it is lived out in the daily life of the school. St Austin's is a place where the values of Jesus, especially respect for self and each other, are very obviously lived out. The Mission Statement informs all school policies and is central to all that happens in the school community. It is displayed around the school building and has been explored with the children. Regular reviews of the Mission Statement enable the governors and staff to effectively monitor and evaluate the Catholic life of the school.

Grade: 1

Collective Worship

The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding. The school provides Collective Worship in a variety of ways for each child daily, in class, whole school or key stage gatherings. This fulfils government and Archdiocesan guidance. An outstanding policy, which has recently been updated, supports the planning and delivery of Collective Worship wherever and whenever it takes place. Since the last inspection in-service has been provided to further develop teachers understanding. Teachers and children plan and deliver Collective Worship.

Parents/carers are invited to participate in celebrations. Acts of worship include various forms of prayer, scripture, powerpoint presentations, reflection, joyful singing and other elements that support liturgical formation. Worship stimulates reflection on spiritual and moral issues and on personal beliefs. The Collective Worship observed was outstanding.

Children and adults actively participate in acts of worship. In many classes they are also given quality time for reflection at the end of Religious Education lessons. Collective Worship makes an outstanding contribution to spiritual and moral development.

Grade: 1

Community Cohesion

The school is outstanding in promoting community cohesion. 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 and carers are involved in decision-making and the life of the school. They are invited to celebrations, receive regular newsletters and have opportunities to share their views e.g. questionnaires, discussion about new school etc.

Collective Worship celebrates, reflects and respects the diversity of belief within the school. The use of the Religious Education Programme, *Here I Am*, provides outstanding support to Community cohesion. Children have had opportunity to explore the beliefs and values of other faiths: Judaism and

Hinduism. This has been greatly enriched by the contribution made by visitors. St Austin's has very strong links with the parish and local community e.g. Parish Priest supporting Religious Education and leading liturgical celebrations, celebrations in Church to which parishioners are invited, school choir singing at a local residential home, children involved in local Junior Democracy week etc. The school community shows a concern for the well being of those less fortunate than themselves in their support of local and global charities e.g. CAFOD, Good Shepherd, Willowbrook Hospice etc.

Grade: 1