



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST STEPHEN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

WARRINGTON

Tuesday 23 June 2009

Inspectors Ms Nora Finnegan Mrs Meg Buckley

URN 111310

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Catholic Primary
Age range of pupils	4 -11
Number on roll	199
Chair of governors	Rev Gordon Abbs
School address	Sandy Lane, Orford, Warrington, Cheshire WA2 9HS
Telephone number	01925 630100
E-mail address	ststephens_primary_head@warrington.gov.uk
Date of last inspection	28 th September 2006
Headteacher	Mrs Maria McGarry

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 Stephen's Catholic Primary School, which is slightly smaller than most primary schools, is situated in Orford, Warrington. It serves the local parish of St Stephen First Martyr. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals and the number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much higher than in most schools. The majority of children are of White British heritage with few from minority ethnic groups. The small number of children who speak English as an additional language are mainly from Polish backgrounds. An above average number of children join and leave the school at different points in the school year. Children enter the school with skills that are well below those typical for their age.

There are 199 children on roll of whom 106 are baptised Catholics and 93 come from another Christian denomination. There are no children from an Other Faith tradition. There are 11 full-time members of staff 10 of whom are Catholic. Eight of the 10 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 Stephen's is an outstanding Catholic school underpinned by a very strong Catholic ethos. It is a caring, inclusive community which is "growing together, celebrating the good news of Jesus and providing each child with quality teaching and learning opportunities to enable them to achieve their true potential". It is very obviously a place where the values of Jesus, especially "tolerance, forgiveness and respect for self and others" 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 learners. Children's behaviour is outstanding. They are also enabled to make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider 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 clear understanding of the mission of a Catholic school and her service to the community. 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 links fostered with the parish and both the local and wider community.

Grade: 1

Improvement since the last inspection

The school had one key issue from its last Inspection in September 2006. Since then, whole school in-service has been provided to further develop teachers understanding of the *Here I Am* programme. In order to ensure that the needs of all children are met the school has introduced the use of differentiated tasks and creative teaching and learning strategies. This has greatly enhanced the delivery of Religious Education. Formal assessment of Religious Education is fully in place and the information gathered has been used very effectively to raise standards. All members of the school community have been involved in the development of the Mission Statement and its clear aims and practical objectives. Children have been given opportunity to explore the Mission statement at their own level. The Religious Education Coordinator, supported by the leadership team, has worked hard to introduce a consistent approach to planning, delivery and assessment of Religious Education. Time and finance have been provided for the

development of the coordinator and for whole staff in-service Teachers understanding of Collective Worship has been further developed and a whole school planning system has been introduced. The Religious Education handbook and the Collective Worship policy have been updated. Resources have 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 accurate. 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 well below that expected nationally. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the number eligible for free school meals is much higher than the national 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. Good use of challenging questions and tasks is made to enable more able children fulfil their potential. The school checks on the progress made by all children through outstanding use of assessment. Information gathered from formal assessment has been used very effectively to inform teaching and learning and raise standards. Children's work is marked with positive and challenging comments.

Children are very confident in discussion and feedback and have an outstanding knowledge of the subject and it's relevance to their lives. They show enthusiasm for Religious Education while undertaking their work. The

behaviour of children throughout the school is outstanding. The children are enabled to make an outstanding contribution both to the school and wider community e. g. School Council organising fundraising etc.

Grade: 1

Quality of Provision for Religious Education

Teaching and learning

The evidence from 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. The learning objective is shared and explored to enable children fully understand the purpose of the lesson. Teaching is confident and outstanding use is made of a variety of resources to challenge and stimulate all learners. The learning needs of all children, including those who are more able, are addressed through use of a variety of creative teaching and learning strategies. Challenging, differentiated tasks for the more able and good support, for those less able, ensures that all children are enabled to make progress and achieve their potential. The work given enables the children to work well independently and collaboratively. Children's religious literacy is developed very well e.g. exploring what "consequences" and "conscience" mean. Learning is summed up very effectively during the plenary session and related to the objective. Children are given time to reflect in order to relate their learning to their everyday lives. The learning environment throughout the school is creative and stimulating and *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 used very effectively to inform teaching and learning and raise standards further. It also enables the leadership team and the governors to identify the progress being made in Religious Education.

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. This enables them to become fully involved in their children's Religious Education. Parents/carers are also invited to celebrations. They receive regular verbal and written reports of their child's progress.

Grade: 1

Curriculum

The school is outstanding in meeting the Religious Education curriculum needs and interests of all learners. Through use of a variety of creative teaching and learning strategies, together with differentiated tasks, the needs of all children are met. Those children who are less able are very well

supported in all classes. The good practice of challenging the more able through questioning and provision of differentiated tasks enables them to achieve their full 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. The use of role play, music, information communication technology, art and other creative activities enrich the delivery of the Religious Education curriculum.

The parish makes an outstanding contribution to the Religious Education curriculum e.g. children visiting Church to see artefacts, parish priest role playing Baptism etc. 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 they make have consequences for themselves and others. The school has policies, with clear aims and objectives, to support spiritual and moral development and these are very obviously being 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 clear vision for the subject within the mission of the school with a focus on raising standards. The Religious Education coordinator, supported by the leadership team, provides outstanding leadership for the staff who share a commitment to the subject's aims and values. She is fully committed to her role and has worked hard to ensure that all new initiatives have been introduced. An outstanding handbook, which has recently been updated, 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 to attend Topic days to support them in their planning and delivery of Religious Education.

Performance in Religious Education is monitored through scrutiny of planning, workbooks, assessment and displays, observation of lessons and questioning of learners. Strengths and areas for development have been highlighted and shared with staff. This has enabled the school to identify in-service needs and so raise standards further. St Stephen's is socially inclusive by providing

equality of access and of opportunity for all learners to make progress. Of the 10 staff teaching Religious Education 8 have a suitable qualification. Other adults 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 updated on a regular basis. The Headteacher and the Religious Education coordinator keep the governors fully informed of the strengths and areas for development. The Chair of Governors is the link governor for Religious Education. Governors discharge their responsibilities in an outstanding manner and are very involved in the life of the school.

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 Stephen's is very obviously an inclusive Christian community which respects and nurtures all its members.

The Mission Statement was developed by all members of the school community. It has clear aims and practical objectives which show how its mission to "celebrate the good news of Jesus, develop the potential of all its members and work in partnership with the home, parish and wider community" is lived out. The children have been given opportunity to explore the mission statement at their own level and have developed their own motto. The Mission Statement informs all school policies and plans and is central to all that happens in the life of the school. A PowerPoint presentation has been developed to enable the school to share it with new parents. The Mission Statement is reviewed annually by the staff and governors. This enables them to monitor and evaluate the Catholic life of the school very effectively.

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 gives clear guidelines to support the planning and delivery of Collective Worship wherever and whenever it takes place. Teachers and children plan and deliver Collective Worship. The school has adopted the planning format provided by the liturgy office to ensure that all Collective Worship is an enriching experience. 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 some 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 and values diversity. Equal opportunities are ensured through provision of a challenging Religious Education curriculum which meets the needs of all learners.

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.

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. Pupils have had opportunity to explore the beliefs and values of other faiths: Judaism, Islam and Hinduism. St Stephen's has very strong links with the local and wider community e. g. school and parish joining together to celebrate liturgies and raise awareness of Fair Trade, children being part of 'Voices Together' at the Cathedral, links with local schools and an international link with Bano Asuboi school in Ghana.

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, Nugent Care, Marie Curie, St Rocco's Hospice etc.

Grade: 1