



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST GERARD'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

WIDNES

Inspection Date Tuesday 16th November 2010

Inspectors Mrs. Denise Hegarty Mr. Mike Halford

Unique Reference Number 111391

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 165 + Nursery

Chair of Governors Mr. P. Finney

Head teacher Mr. K. Landrum

School address Lugsdale Road
Widnes
Cheshire
WA8 6DD

Telephone number 0151 424 2879

E-mail address head.stgerards@halton.gov.uk

Date of last inspection 9 May 2007

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. Gerard's is a smaller than average sized Catholic Primary school serving the parish of St Marie's, Widnes in the Halton District of the Archdiocese. The school is situated in the town centre in an area with below average levels of social and economic deprivation. There are currently 165 children on roll of whom 96 are baptised Catholic and 66 come from other Christian denominations. There are 3 children from another faith tradition. There are 10 children of nursery age who join the reception children in the foundation class in the morning and in the afternoon. Years 3 and 4 are organised into 2 mixed aged classes. Children come in to school with levels of attainment that are below national expectations. Of the 8 teachers at the school, 5 are Catholic and 4 have a qualification in Religious Education. The headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

© 2010 copyright – Archdiocese of Liverpool. This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

Inspection Judgements

Overall effectiveness:

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main Findings:-

St. Gerard's Primary and Nursery School provides satisfactory Catholic education overall with many good elements and some outstanding features. There is a shared vision for Catholic Education which is embraced by the whole school community and reinforced in the school's Mission Statement. Its values and ethos are visibly reflected in the exemplary attitudes and relationships between all members of the school community where love and respect are shown to all. Children thrive in the caring atmosphere the school provides and they become happy and contented learners with positive attitudes towards each other. They are true ambassadors for and very proud members of their school. Since the last inspection, there has been a little recent improvement towards establishing a more rigorous and effective system for monitoring and evaluating the impact of initiatives relating to the school's Catholic life and Religious Education. Self evaluation needs to be further embedded in the cycle for school improvement but a good attempt has been made in compiling the self evaluation document. There are realistic timescales for completion but clear lines of accountability should also be included.

Achievement in Religious Education is good. Most pupils make good progress given their starting points. There is no significant difference in performance between groups of pupils although the more able pupils could be challenged further in order to achieve their true potential. Children behave extremely well, are very happy in school and are highly considerate of others. They make a very positive contribution to the Catholic life of the school and respond outstandingly to Collective Worship.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education is satisfactory with many good elements. Assessment of Religious Education is at a very early stage in its development and is not yet informing planning sufficiently. The Religious Education curriculum is good and meets requirements. The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is very good and has been monitored by a member of the leadership team.

The school is systematically addressing the areas it has identified for improvement. The subject leadership team, comprising of the headteacher and two other senior leaders, is motivated and communicates its high expectations to staff as they strive to secure improvement to outcomes and provision. Staff are encouraged and supported in their ongoing development. School leaders are committed to the ethos and mission of the school and promote high expectations of all pupils spiritually, morally and socially. Governors carry out their duties in a satisfactory manner. Parents are supportive and appreciate what the school does for their children. They are happy with the values and

attitudes taught. The parish priest is pleased with the way the school works closely with the parish and enjoys sharing Mass at school each month for the whole community. Leaders and managers in school promote community cohesion outstandingly.

Given the dedication and commitment shown by the leadership of the school, their willingness to continue self-evaluation leading to appropriate priorities and challenging targets being set, there is now a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Continue to implement the targets set out in the school's Self-Evaluation Document. That includes:
 - continuing to implement assessment procedures in Religious Education;
 - ensuring work is differentiated to meet the needs of all the children in the classes. This should include challenging the higher attainers;
 - improving the role of governance;
 - making parents more aware of what their children are learning in Religious Education.
- Raise standards in Religious Education by:
 - increasing staff and governors awareness of the Levels of Attainment in Religious Education, moderating the levelling of assessments across year groups and using assessments to inform planning;
 - making use of the 'driver words' in planning and when questioning the children to consistently focus teaching and learning at an appropriate level;
 - having higher expectations especially of the more able pupils and of the older pupils in mixed aged classes;
 - using a greater variety of tasks to fully meet the needs of all the pupils;
 - continuing the good start made in monitoring Religious Education to identify areas for development and to be able to celebrate and share good practice;
 - reporting on standards of attainment to governors thus enabling them to provide challenge and support.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Pupils' achievements in Religious Education are good and children make good progress through the school. Analyses of assessments undertaken to date and scrutiny of their work provide evidence of pupils generally attaining satisfactory levels for their age and stage of development. There is no difference in performance between pupils of different gender. Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are also satisfactory. They are supported in their work by additional adults and teaching assistants. Tasks given need to be consistently differentiated and varied to meet the needs of all pupils and work pitched at the appropriate level for them to achieve their true potential in Religious Education. Children are becoming increasingly more religiously literate as they familiarise themselves with the key words from the topics and can relate their own life experiences to the Christian understanding of the

topics. They work well independently and collaboratively showing interest, enjoyment and enthusiasm.

Pupils, from an early age, participate willingly and benefit greatly from a range of activities the school provides. They take on roles of responsibility which contribute outstandingly to the Catholic life of the school and the wider community. The school councillors spoke proudly about their fund raising activities for CAFOD and the S.V.P and how they collected milk bottle tops for disabled people. Pupils show a good understanding of what is right and wrong, follow their class rules and behave outstandingly. They are actively involved in outreach work locally; nationally and globally e.g. in fund raising for charity, collecting shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child and working with the local women's aid refuge and the traveller community.

Pupils respond to, and participate outstandingly in Collective Worship. They are reverent, prayerful and show the utmost respect. Their knowledge of prayer and liturgy is increasing and they are familiar with a variety of prayer styles. Pupils' liturgical formation is developing very well. No-one is expected to act in a manner contrary to their beliefs. Pupils have acquired a range of skills which enable them to prepare and lead celebrations as appropriate to their age and stage of development and beyond. They plan well, selecting appropriate readings, prayers and resources and they enjoy delivering and participating in a variety of settings. The children sing joyfully, reflect purposefully and join in community prayers confidently.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
How well pupils achieve in Religious Education	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of pupils' learning and their progress in Religious Education 	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

The quality of teaching is effective in ensuring that pupils are interested and engaged in their work and make progress. Inservice provision enables staff to have an up to date knowledge and understanding of current developments. Teachers plan to provide opportunities for pupils to work both independently and collaboratively. Effort and achievement are recognised, rewarded and celebrated. Teachers are starting to use developmental marking that indicates what pupils have to do in the next steps of their learning. Effective use is made of time and resources are very well-deployed. Behaviour is well managed across the school with very effective and consistent use of praise and rewards. Teachers and other adults are excellent role models for the children to emulate.

The assessment of pupils' work in Religious Education is not yet fully in place. Teachers must use the information gleaned in their future planning to ensure

that given tasks are pitched at appropriate levels. Formal assessment tasks have started to be undertaken and recorded appropriately. Once the formal assessment of work has been moderated to ensure levelling is correct, the information can be given to staff and governors to enable them to be aware of the standards of Religious Education across the school. Progress can be tracked and those pupils who are underachieving and achieving exceptionally well identified and appropriate targets set for them. Annual reports in Religious Education are good in informing parents what their children have undertaken in the subject and once assessment is fully in place, progress and achievement can also be included.

The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. Staff and leaders see Religious Education as the core subject. 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 the different year groups. 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. Planning indicates full coverage of the Religious Education programme. Termly Religious Education letters are now sent home for parents and carers and these provide information about what is being taught in Religious Education, and how they can support their children's learning. Many cross curricular links are made. Children are offered many opportunities to benefit from and contribute to the Catholic life of the school, all of which have a positive impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is enriched by visits and visitors to the school e.g. children visited the Metropolitan Cathedral and a local synagogue. They received a visit from a member of the Jewish community who taught them about Judaism and brought in many resources, artefacts and ritual objects.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good. Teachers (and pupils) plan well and the subject leadership ensure it is monitored effectively. Provision for Collective Worship has a high profile in the school. Resources, including the use of ICT, are provided to enhance worship and are kept up to date. An excellent policy and guidelines are in place. Beautiful focus tables and devotional areas around the school enable the children to reflect purposefully on the theme for worship. Collective Worship reflects the Catholic character of the school and takes into account the variety of backgrounds among the pupils. Staff members have received in-service training in planning and delivering Collective Worship and use their skills well to engage the children. Collective Worship and regular prayer times play a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils. Children are enabled to pray formally and informally. The school should now provide more opportunities for children to develop their skills in planning and leading Collective Worship in an age appropriate way. Parents and carers are sometimes invited to join in celebrations. A monthly Mass is held in the school hall for the school and parish community.

The school learning environment is positive and vibrant. Great care is taken to provide modern resources for pupils of all ages. Adults and children take great pride in their school.

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	3
The effectiveness of assessment in Religious Education	4
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the schools

Leaders and managers promote and develop the Catholic life of the school well and show a good understanding of and commitment to, the Mission of the Church. This is reflected in the school's own Mission Statement, 'We place ourselves and our school in the hands of God – guided by him, we love and respect everyone in our own and the wider community,' and in its distinct caring, Catholic ethos. All those who form part of the school community were involved in the development of their Mission Statement. Aims and practical objectives that direct and guide every aspect of school life still need to be put into place. Opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in Catholic life and the Mission of the school e.g. in outreach, charity work and in raising awareness of those in need.

There is commitment and drive for improvement demonstrated by the subject leadership team which includes the new head teacher and two other established senior leaders. The self evaluation document is comprehensive and accurate in determining strengths and areas for development. Timescales are in place but clear lines of accountability now need to be included to ensure the school's priorities and targets are clear. Staff members are encouraged to keep their knowledge and understanding of the subject up to date through courses and in-service training.

Leaders and managers are beginning to use monitoring data to evaluate the schools performance, celebrate, and plan future improvements. There is a need to put in place a more comprehensive monitoring and evaluation programme which is rigorously undertaken for teaching and learning, planning, children's work and assessments. The findings should then contribute to the self evaluation document and be monitored carefully throughout the year. The subject leadership team fulfils their role very well with enthusiasm and great commitment. Archdiocesan briefings and training sessions are attended and information received is fed back to all staff members at inservice sessions and staff briefings. Reports are regularly produced for the Governing Body. Very good documentation guides and directs all staff in their delivery of the subject.

Governors discharge their responsibilities in a satisfactory manner. They promote the school's Catholic identity and are regular visitors in school. A link governor for Religious Education has recently been appointed and it is hoped that this will ensure that this will lead to more effective challenge and support being provided. Once the school tracks pupil achievement in Religious Education, the governors will have the data to analyse the school's performance in the subject and to monitor what needs to be done to further

raise standards. Members of the Governing Body have attended training sessions to enable them to fully develop their roles effectively.

Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all. Prayer, worship and the liturgical life of the school reflects and respects the religious diversity within the school community. There are positive relationships at every level leading to a welcoming, happy, caring learning environment for staff and pupils. Leaders and managers facilitate pupils' involvement in service to the immediate neighbourhood served by the school and the wider community. 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 Judaism and Islam. This has been further enhanced by visitors who shared aspects of their faith and by visits to a local synagogue. These experiences have helped to promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently and enabled the children to understand how others make sense of the world in which we live and help.

The school has good links with the parish. The parish priest is a regular visitor and appreciates the commitment of the school in nurturing the children's faith. He celebrates a monthly Mass for the whole community in the school hall. All parents and parishioners are invited to attend with the children.

The pupils are developing an understanding of the common good and an awareness of global responsibilities. The school community shows a concern for the well-being of those less fortunate than themselves both by becoming better informed and by raising funds and resources for local, national and global charities e.g. in their donations to the Good Shepherd fund for Nugent Care, Mission Together, the local refuge and CAFOD.

Parents and carers are involved in their children's learning in a variety of ways. Newsletters are now provided to enable them to gain information about what their children are learning in Religious Education and how they can help them do so.

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are addressed decisively and responsibilities met	3
How effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion	1