



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. AMBROSE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

SPEKE

Inspection Date 10 June 2014

Inspectors Mrs. Denise Hegarty, Mrs. Dorothy Martin

Unique Reference Number

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

Type of School Catholic Primary

Age range of pupils 4 - 11

Number on roll 278

Chair of Governors Fr. Edward Cain

Headteacher Mrs. T. O'Neill

School address Alderfield Drive,
Speke,
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Date of last inspection 4 October 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

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.

Information about this school

- St. Ambrose School is an average sized Catholic Primary School situated in Speke serving the parish of St. Ambrose, Speke in the Liverpool district of the Archdiocese.
- There are 278 children on roll of whom 252 are baptised Catholic, 8 are from other Christian denominations and 18 pupils have no specified Religious affiliation.
- There are 14 teachers at the school 13 of whom are baptised Catholic. Thirteen teachers teach Religious Education and 10 teachers have a suitable qualification in the subject.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Overall effectiveness:

St. Ambrose Catholic Primary School is a good school in providing Catholic Education.

Inspection Judgements

The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.

- The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.
- Pupils know and understand the school's Mission Statement, *'To follow the example of Jesus'* and appreciate the demands that living the mission places on them. Representatives were involved in its evaluation and review.
- Pupils have an excellent sense of belonging to this school community and are great ambassadors for it as they hold each others' views and opinions in high regard and are very polite to each other and to adults in the community. They enjoy their life here, know that adults listen to them and are very loyal to the school.
- Pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility in the school and wider community e.g. through their roles as school councillors, peer advocates, playground monitors and reading buddies to name but a few. Within these roles, they learn organisational skills and the importance of co-operating with each other and considering the needs of others.
- Pupils are actively involved in developing the Catholic character of the school by raising awareness of and generously supporting a variety of local, national and global charities including CAFOD and Nugent Care. They willingly support the less well off and vulnerable as they contribute to and serve community projects including Radio City's cash for Kids Appeal, Operation Christmas Child, packing bags in a local supermarket for charity etc. In the Year of Faith, they also helped to create a 'Faith Trail' around the school which enabled all members of the school community to reflect on their beliefs and values.
- Pupils host tea parties and football tournaments for parents and enjoy these experiences.
- They embrace opportunities to meet their potential in all aspects of school life and benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities e.g. sports clubs, dance, drama, photography and music. Through these, they learn the values of working together, commitment and taking responsibility.
- Children from Years 3-6 have had the opportunity to participate actively in residential trips to the Isle of Man, Barnstondale Activity Centre and Colomendy Centre for Outdoor Education. These experiences impact greatly on the pupils' social and moral development as they develop self-confidence, and understand the value and importance of communication, interpersonal skills and teamwork.
- Pupils have a very good sense of right and wrong and apply this in their personal relationships. They take an increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions within the positive code of conduct upheld by each class within the school. Behaviour during lessons is generally outstanding. Pupils have developed positive attitudes towards work. In line with their Mission Statement, children are co-operative, caring and friendly towards each other.
- They are well equipped for the challenges they face in life. Children in Year 4, undertaking a lesson on Reconciliation, understood that their conscience was *'..a feeling in your body that tells you what is right and what is wrong..'* and they could *'..put the past behind you and think about the present..'* when they were reconciled.
- Pupils praise and acknowledge the contribution of others. They congratulate each other on their successes and show a readiness to embrace and celebrate their experiences

especially during Collective Worship and at the weekly awards assembly. They are quick to forgive others who have upset them in any way.

- They are involved in service to the local faith and religious communities. They enjoy planning and participating in a variety of liturgical celebrations e.g. Remembrance Day, Mothers' Day and devotions to Our Lady. They appreciated the opportunity to perform Christmas carols at community events and were very proud when a CD of their performance was produced.
- Polish children attending the school have developed links with John Paul 11 Primary School in Wegrow, Poland and send cards to pupils there. They are thrilled to receive replies.
- Pupils show respect and understanding of other faiths and religions and have enjoyed learning about Judaism and Islam within the curriculum.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Pupils' achievements and enjoyment in Religious Education is good.
- Their attainment in Religious Education is in line with what is expected.
- They make good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities.
- On entry to school many children have a limited knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.
- There is no difference in performance between pupils of different gender.
- Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are also good.
- Analysis of assessments undertaken provides evidence of pupils generally attaining appropriate level for their age and stage of development in each key stage.
- Pupils are becoming increasingly more religiously literate. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developing appropriate to their age or capacity.
- They are developing the skills that enable them to reflect spiritually, think ethically and theologically and are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.
- Pupils' engagement in and enjoyment of their learning is outstanding as shown by their interest, positive attitude and excellent behaviour. At their interview, pupils reported that they found Religious Education lessons fun and enjoyable. They particularly enjoyed lessons which included drama, role play and making PowerPoint presentations.
- Pupils are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively and do so sensibly and with enthusiasm and co-operation. They gain much from the opportunities that arise to work with their talking partners.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

- Pupils' response to and participation in Collective Worship is outstanding.
- They show interest, respond exceptionally well and actively participate in Collective Worship.
- They act with reverence and are keen and eager to participate in a variety of gatherings.
- Pupils' knowledge of prayer and liturgy is increasing.
- They become familiar with a variety of prayer styles. They appreciate and are open and respectful to the Word of God in the scriptures.
- They sing joyfully, reflect purposefully in silence and join in community prayers appropriately and with confidence.
- They are becoming increasingly more confident preparing and leading worship from their earliest years. This was clearly evident on the day of inspection from both observations and interviews.

- Pupils are able to select appropriate hymns, readings from scripture, prayers and artefacts for their focus table. Some also compose suitable PowerPoint presentations to enhance worship.
- Year 6 pupils confidently deliver assemblies and worship on wide ranging themes and older pupils enjoy coaching the younger ones. Consequently, their liturgical skills are developing well.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education is good.
- It is consistently effective in ensuring that pupils are interested and engaged and make good progress.
- Teachers display good subject knowledge and deploy a range of teaching styles to motivate and inspire pupils. They are good role models for the children to emulate. Most teachers have a Religious Education qualification.
- Teaching encourages pupils' enjoyment of and enthusiasm of Religious Education.
- Teachers take into account pupils' prior learning well. Most ensure tasks are differentiated when planning so that the work consolidates, builds and extends their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively. Good use is made of resources and Information and Communication Technology to maximise learning.
- They have high expectations of the pupils they teach in terms of attitude and behaviour, but need to extend these expectations to challenging the content and presentation of work.
- Where teaching is outstanding, the pace of the lesson is swift and pupils are informed of their progress and how to improve their work.
- Teachers receive excellent support from experienced teaching assistants and additional adults. These are deployed very well to support and assess learners. They make significant contribution to the teaching and learning that takes place and are a good indication of the school's commitment to inclusion.
- Excellent use is made of praise and affirmation in each class which promotes a positive learning environment for pupils. The contributions they make are valued and appreciated. Effort and achievement are celebrated.
- Displays and working walls in classrooms and around the school, celebrate the children's work, reinforce learning and provide opportunities for reflection.
- The assessment of pupils work in Religious Education from the earliest years is very good. '*Assessment for Learning*' strategies are generally used effectively across the school in the subject.
- The school has outstanding assessment procedures which provide accurate and detailed information on the achievement of all the pupils. Progress and attainment is tracked and analysed. Teachers are thus able to identify how well pupils are achieving and can then tackle underachievement.
- The good practice in marking seen in Year 4 workbooks could be further developed and shared with others to ensure consistency across the school and enable pupils to understand how to improve their work.
- Teachers enable pupils to evaluate their own work especially during the plenary sessions at the end of lessons.

The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils' learning

- The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils' learning is good.
- The curriculum is good in meeting pupils' needs. Religious Education is seen as the core curriculum subject in this school. A generous budget is allocated for the subject.
- The school using the *Come and See* programme recommended by the Archdiocese meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. Appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. 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 ensures coverage of the Religious Education programme. Imaginative and well planned strategies are deployed to enrich pupils' learning. More emphasis should be placed on the final part of the process, *RESPOND*. This will give the children more opportunity to assimilate and celebrate what they have learned in each topic and clearly identify how it could impact on their future lives.
- The school implements new curriculum developments as appropriate and purchases suitable resources in support.
- Enrichment activities such as sport, music, dance, drama etc. have a positive impact on the curriculum, promote respect for the gifts and talents of each individual and help to raise self esteem.
- Displays in classrooms and around the school are linked to the curriculum and celebrate work.
- The Religious Education curriculum provides excellent opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral development and vocation.
- The impact of the International Primary Curriculum, followed by the school, has enhanced the children's respect for and understanding of the wider world and their place within it.
- Visitors are frequently invited into school to widen pupils' knowledge. These have included a visually impaired man who had overcome adversity to fulfil his potential.
- The parish priest is a regular visitor and makes a significant contribution to the curriculum. Visits have been made to the parish church to see the Easter Garden and the Stations of the Cross and to the cathedral.
- Children across the school have explored the beliefs and values of the Jewish faith and of Islam. This helps to promote tolerance and respect for those who think and worship differently.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good.
- It has a high profile and is central to the life of the school. It reflects its Catholic character well and is considered to be a precious time by staff and pupils alike.
- Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the spiritual needs of the pupils enabling them to explore and share their beliefs and understand the relevance to their own lives.
- Opportunities are provided to enable full, active and conscious participation of the whole school community.
- Timings and content are generally age and stage appropriate. This ensures it is a suitable, personal experience for the children. Consideration is given to the needs of others and a sense of community developed.
- Collective Worship is planned effectively and adults provide good role models for pupils to emulate.

- Children are enabled to pray formally and informally using a variety of prayer methods and styles. The school ensures that appropriate formal prayers are taught at an age appropriate time. Some hymns are sung and prayers said in Polish to include the large number of Polish immigrants.
- The school has purchased a rich variety of suitable resources which are stored carefully and used effectively to enhance worship.
- Focal areas or reflection tables are available in each classroom each of which encourages the children to make links to the theme and create sacred spaces to enhance worship.
- Photographs taken during Acts of Worship are proudly displayed on Visual Display Units for others to see.
- The school provides opportunities for staff to develop the skills in planning, leading and evaluating Collective Worship.
- The teachers provide the necessary resources and opportunities to help children to develop the skills necessary to plan, lead and participate in Collective Worship and to evaluate it effectively.
- Opportunities are provided for parents, carers the local and wider faith communities to participate in a variety of celebrations of the *Come and See* programme and the Church's liturgical year. These special times demonstrate what the children learn in their topics and enable parents to work in partnership with the school to enrich and enhance this learning.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are good in promoting monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic life of the school and in the way they plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils. They are committed to developing the Catholic life of the school and show a good understanding of and commitment to the Mission of the Church.
- This is reflected in the school's own Mission Statement, '*Follow the Example of Jesus*' which is at the heart of everything that happens in the school. All who form part of the school community including parents, clergy, governors and children were involved in the development of the Mission Statement. Its aims and objectives direct and guide school life. To become a more a useful tool by which the school can evaluate its effectiveness, the aims and objectives connected to the Mission Statement would benefit from being reviewed, rationalised and expanded to fully reflect the nature of the school and all it does to fulfil its mission.
- The school Motto and Mission Statement is displayed prominently and proudly throughout the school and informs all policies and plans.
- The Christian ethos is weaved through all aspects of school life. All members of the community aim to follow the example of Jesus and are very proud of all their achievements in striving to do so. The ethos of the school is evident in the manner and attitudes of the staff and children. A friendly, supportive atmosphere prevails.
- Pupils are encouraged to gain in confidence, esteem and tolerance and to develop self-respect, forgiveness and self-control as they interact with their peers.
- Good opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in Catholic life and mission of the school as for example in following the example of Jesus they reach out to others through the charity work they undertake.
- This is an open and welcoming community where staff, pupils and parents feel at home and of value. They appreciate what leaders, governors and managers do to facilitate their roles and provide them with opportunities for development.

- Leaders, governors and managers are very good in the way they use monitoring data to evaluate the schools performance, celebrate, and plan future improvements.
- The Self Evaluation Document provides evidence of the school's monitoring, analysis and self challenge. This analysis provides a basis to celebrate the school's strengths and outlines areas for development. It identifies targets, timescales and lines of accountability and is an accurate reflection of the life of the school.
- The school provides good induction and in-service training to enable staff to further understand the Church's Mission in Education and to play their unique part in it.
- The quality of Collective Worship is a priority for the school. It is effectively monitored and evaluated by leaders, governors and managers. A relevant policy is in place which needs some minor alterations to bring it fully up to date.
- A range of opportunities for spiritual and moral development are provided for staff and pupils especially through the work of the parish priest who leads special Masses and assemblies linked to the Liturgical year and other special events e.g. the 'Welcome Mass' at the start of the school year.
- Matters of social justice are given high importance with many examples of awareness and fund raising for a variety of good causes e.g. CAFOD and Nugent Care (Good Shepherd).
- The message from the '*Joy of the Gospel*' is shared in a trail across the school. Practical ways for the school community to live out the messages from the apostolic exhortation are placed at stations throughout the school.
- 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 diversity within the school.
- There are positive relationships at every level within the school and very close links the parish community.
- The subject co-ordinator and the parish priest meet regularly to discuss the Catholic life of the school and issues related to it. Staff and other members of the school community are kept informed of the outcomes of these meetings.
- The school works well with the parish to prepare the children for the Sacraments of Initiation. All pupils understand the importance of key celebrations in the Church's year and show respect and care for religious objects and artefacts in school and church.
- The *Wednesday Word* is provided for each child to take home every week to share the gospel message with their families.
- St. Ambrose has excellent links with local primary and secondary schools.
- Parents are consulted regularly and involved in a variety of ways in the life of the school. They are kept well-informed through newsletters and the school website and their views and opinions are regularly sought. The FAST programme, an eight week project undertaken regularly by the school that brings Families and School Together, connects with parents and empowers them to work in partnership with the school to make sure that their children get the support they need to fulfil their potential in school – and in life.
- Governors fulfil their responsibilities very well. They have effectively helped to shape the direction of the school through their presence in the school and by being involved in the self-evaluation process. They know the school well; understand its strengths and areas for development.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Religious Education of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in promoting monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Religious Education of the school and in the way they plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.
- Religious Education is at the core of the curriculum in St Ambrose School. A suitable budget is provided to enhance provision. Timetables are monitored to ensure that 10% quality time is dedicated to the teaching the subject.
- Throughout the school, good behaviour and positive attitudes are consistently praised and rewarded. This helps to cement the wonderful relationships that exist between adults and pupils which result in friendly interaction and discussion in Religious Education lessons.
- There is a robust programme for the monitoring and evaluation cycle of the subject.
- Teaching and learning, through classroom observations, scrutiny of planning, assessments and children's work is monitored regularly and appropriate feedback and support given as necessary.
- Monitoring data is used very effectively to evaluate the schools performance and plan for future improvements. However, outstanding practice found during the process should be celebrated and shared across the school more consistently and effectively.
- Formal assessment tasks are undertaken in line with Archdiocesan guidance. This process is well-embedded within the school. Staff moderate work together and are quite secure in their levelling of work. Portfolios of levelled work are being developed across the school.
- Assessment information is collated and tracked by the subject leader and shared with the leadership team and governors and parents.
- The subject co-ordinator is outstanding in guiding and developing Religious Education. He shows great commitment and enthusiasm. Archdiocesan training and briefing sessions are regularly attended and new initiatives introduced when appropriate. Very good documentation guides and directs all staff in the delivery of the subject. This is updated as necessary.
- A Religious Education action plan is in place which identifies appropriate priorities, timescales and lines of accountability. This feeds into the overall Self-Evaluation Document.
- Continuing professional development opportunities are provided for all. Additional support or induction given to new or inexperienced staff members. In-service sessions provided by the Christian Education Team are attended. The school promotes the *Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies* and consequently, most teachers have achieved it.
- Time is used during staff meetings to disseminate any new information for staff.
- Governors are kept well-informed by the subject co-ordinator. They are interested in the subject and proactively involved in challenging and supporting learning.
- Newsletters are provided for parents and carers, which specify the topics to be covered, and outline how parents can support their children's Religious Education. These could also be included on the school website.
- They receive detailed, informative annual reports on progress and achievement. They are also kept conversant through verbal reports on Parents' Evenings and are consulted on different issues depending on the topic being covered and encouraged to support their children's learning in a variety of ways.
- Achievement and effort are celebrated especially at the end of week assemblies which are much appreciated by pupils. An award is presented regularly for endeavour in memory of a child who always did his best.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in Religious Education by:
 - ensuring teachers have higher expectations of the pupils they teach and consequently plan and provide challenging tasks especially for the more able pupils;
 - matching the tasks the teachers give to pupils carefully to the lesson's learning objectives and clearly explaining their relevance to the topic;
 - sharing good practice in teaching and learning;
 - encouraging children to take more pride in the presentation of their work.
- Improve the Religious Education curriculum by:
 - Giving time and worth to the final part of the process – *RESPOND* to enable the children to have more opportunity to assimilate and celebrate what they have learned in each topic and clearly identify how it could impact on their future lives.
- Continue to implement the targets set out in the school's self-evaluation document and subject action plan. These include:
 - allowing children more opportunities for self- and peer-assessment;
 - developing an outside spiritual garden for Collective Worship;
 - making better use of the Come and See for Yourself sheets at the start of the topic;
 - ensuring all staff and governors have their training needs met.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	2
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OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	2
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education	2
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning	2
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders, governors and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders, governors 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, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding; Grade 2 : good; Grade 3 : requires improvement and Grade 4 : inadequate