



## ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

### INSPECTION REPORT

## ST FRANCIS DE SALES CATHOLIC INFANT SCHOOL

### WALTON

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Date of Inspection Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2010

Inspectors Mrs. Denise Hegarty  
Miss. Jackie Coughlan Mrs. Maria McGarry

Unique Reference Number 104651

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School Catholic

Age range of pupils 3 - 7

Number on roll 372 (including Nursery)

Chair of Governors Rev. Fr. John Thompson.

Head teacher Miss Clare Suffield

School address Margaret Road,  
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Date of last inspection 20<sup>th</sup> March 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. Francis de Sales is a larger than average sized Catholic Infant School serving the parish of St. Francis de Sales in the Liverpool district of the Archdiocese. The school is situated in an area of mixed socio-economic background with council and private housing. Children come from a wide variety of family backgrounds. There are currently 372 children on roll (including those in Nursery) of whom 338 are baptised Catholic and 32 come from other Christian denominations. There are 2 children from another faith tradition. The vast majority of children are from a White British heritage. Children come in to school with levels of attainment that are below national expectations. There are above average numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals and also of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Four children have English as an additional language. Of the 16 teachers at the school, 9 are Catholic and 5 have a qualification in Religious Education. Three further teachers are either currently studying for the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or will begin their studies in September. There are strong links and good liaison with St. Francis de Sales Junior School regarding transition to the next Key Stage of learning.

## **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 Francis de Sales is an outstanding Catholic Infant school. It is warm and welcoming Christian community that recognises and celebrates the value and uniqueness of each individual. A positive climate for learning has been established within the school and all members of the community strive hard together to achieve their potential. The Catholic life of the school, underpinned by the Gospel values of love, respect and care, is lived out outstandingly. This has been apparent in the close relationships that exist within the community that help to promote and strengthen the Catholic ethos and lead to good attitudes towards learning. Achievement in Religious Education is outstanding. Standards are good. Learners work hard and make outstanding progress by the end of Year 2. Teaching and learning are good. There are outstanding methods of assessment undertaken rigorously to provide clear guidance on learning. The curriculum is outstanding and meets the needs and interests of all the children. Learners' behaviour is outstanding. The quality of Collective Worship is good and the provision for learners' spiritual and moral development is outstanding. Both curricular Religious Education and Collective Worship make a significant contribution to this development. The school is outstanding in promoting community cohesion. The subject co-ordinator has been outstanding in providing leadership, guidance and support to staff. The head teacher, members of senior management and the governors show outstanding leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners in Religious Education and in developing the Catholic life of the school. This is evident through their clear commitment to the mission of this Catholic school. They are supported well by the Parish Priest and parish community. Leadership at all levels has an awareness of the school's strengths and a clear vision of how to take the school forward, and so the school has an outstanding capacity to improve.

**Grade: 1**

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

Following the last Section 48 Inspection in March 2007, outstanding steps have been taken to address the areas found for development and to keep abreast of new initiatives that have been introduced since that time. A new co-ordinator took up her post in January 2009 and built on the previous good practice that existed. A full audit of provision and resources has taken place. Documentation has been updated. Assessment procedures are embedding and teachers are using the levels of attainment in Religious Education effectively. Each member of staff has the opportunity to attend in-service training and all are encouraged to continue their own professional development by attending the Archdiocesan Topic Days on a rolling programme. Excellent, new resources have been purchased and Information Communication Technology is used effectively to enhance Religious Education and Collective Worship. ICT resources are shared on the school network.

**Grade: 1**

## **Capacity to improve**

The school's self-evaluation document is very good and gives a clear insight into the work of the school. It is an accurate, comprehensive, working document that is reviewed annually as part of the school's cycle of self-review and feeds into the School Development Plan. The school leaders know their school well and are striving to improve provision and standards. Effective monitoring strategies are in place that clearly identify strengths and what needs to be done to make further improvements. Any areas found for improvement are compiled in a subject action plan and their progress monitored. Effective induction processes are in place for new members of staff to enable them to fully participate in the Catholic life of the school and deliver the curriculum effectively. Given the commitment and dedication shown by the headteacher, the subject co-ordinator, governors, parish priest and all staff members, there is outstanding capacity for continuing improvement.

**Grade: 1**

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Continue to implement any areas for development mentioned in the self-evaluation document and add to it any other minor areas mentioned within this report. Include timescales for completion and who will be responsible for implementing and monitoring initiatives. This will give more rigour to the document.

## **Achievement and standards**

Achievement in Religious Education is outstanding. Learners' attainment on entry to the school is generally below that expected with above average numbers of learners having special educational needs. Learners make outstanding progress in the school. Standards in Religious Education overall are good, with pupils meeting the learning objectives and outcomes set, according to their age and stage of development. There is no significant difference in performance by learners of different gender. Learners with special needs make excellent progress in Religious Education with the help provided by additional adult support and differentiated tasks to meet their needs. Behaviour throughout the school is truly outstanding. The children are friendly, polite and good natured. They care for each other and share what they have willingly. Members of staff take care to affirm, praise and celebrate good work and behaviour and this leads to a positive, happy climate for learning. Children are treated fairly, equally and consistently by adults within the school community. They are good role models for the children to emulate. All children work well together enthusiastically and really enjoy their Religious Education lessons. They are given opportunities to record their knowledge and understanding and to express their own thoughts and ideas in a variety of different ways. Children interviewed were confident in discussion and demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of the subject. They felt able to express their thoughts and opinions freely. The children make a

good contribution to the school and community through, for example, their attendance at and contribution to the School Council.

**Grade: 1**

## **Quality of Provision for Religious Education**

### **Teaching and learning**

Overall the quality of provision for Religious Education is good. Teachers provide the children with material that is interesting and consequently learners are motivated to learn and enjoy their lessons. The learning needs of children are addressed through the use of good teaching and learning strategies, and by effective help from teaching assistants and additional adults. In lessons observed, children remained happily on task throughout. In their interviews, they spoke confidently about all the topics covered this year, and were able to relate the relevance of their life experience to the Christian understanding of the topics. Work is recorded in a variety of different ways to meet the children's learning needs. The school checks on the progress made by all through its ongoing rigorous assessment and tracking procedures. Teachers know their pupils well. Scrutiny of the formal assessments made has ensured that they have an understanding and awareness of the levels of attainment in Religious Education. This enables them to plan effectively to meet the needs of learners and to raise standards. The subject co-ordinator is developing a clear view of learning and teaching through monitoring processes. Formal lesson observations have been undertaken and teachers have received constructive feedback on performance. Planning is sound and caters for the full range of ability in the class. Parents and carers are enabled to become involved in their children's Religious Education outstandingly through the provision of termly newsletters which gives parents a good understanding of what their children are learning in the subject and helps them to fulfil a supporting role. They are invited to curriculum and information meetings and to parent / teacher interviews which take place throughout the year. On these occasions, they are also encouraged to view their children's work. Reports sent home concerning the children's achievement and progress are very informative as the language of the level descriptors in the levels of attainment and the topic expectations are used.

**Grade: 2**

### **Curriculum**

The Religious Education curriculum meets the needs and interests of learners outstandingly. 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 different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets national and diocesan requirements. The leadership of the school ensures suitable positioning of the subject on timetables to allow quality time to be devoted to the subject across the school. Of the total curriculum time at least 10% is

allocated to Religious Education. This practice is outstanding and fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. Overall the Religious Education curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to learners' spiritual and moral development as the Gospel values of love, respect and caring for others underpin the provision. Some opportunities are taken for reflection on what has been learned in the plenary sessions of lessons. This provision is further enhanced through circle time and cross curricular opportunities that are taken to promote shared values, to make pupils aware of their own identity and to value differences.

**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 as laid out in the school's self evaluation document. It truly reflects the school's mission in developing its Catholic life and Religious Education. Leadership is focussed on improving standards and promoting the spiritual, moral and personal development and well-being of the whole community. The Religious Education Co-ordinator provides outstanding leadership and commitment to the subject. She works hard to support staff members and has shared all recent initiatives with them. Archdiocesan briefings and meetings are well attended and information etc. is shared with staff members at designated staff meetings. This has ensured that they are kept up to date of any new information, resources etc. Very good documentation guides and directs all staff in their delivery of the subject. Performance in Religious Education, planning, work samples, resources and formal assessments have been monitored well and feedback given to individuals and staff as a whole. Time should be taken to reflect on the impact of monitoring that has taken place, to clearly identify the outcomes and allow them time to embed. Self-assessment is undertaken for each topic by staff and learners. St Francis de Sales infant school is socially inclusive by providing outstanding equality of access and of opportunity for all learners to make progress. Teachers often plan collaboratively to ensure consistency and equal opportunities for all the children. Of the 16 teachers at the school, 9 are Catholic and 5 have a suitable qualification in Religious Education. Three further teachers are currently studying for the *Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies*. This should be further encouraged. A rolling programme allowing staff to attend Archdiocesan topic days is in place enabling them to deepen their awareness and understanding of the process and of the underlying theology in '*Here I Am*'. The use of the '*Before You Begin*' section of this programme also helps staff to have further insight into the content of the topics they teach. The budget for Religious Education is outstanding and has enabled some excellent resources to be purchased. These have been effectively used to raise standards and to enhance teaching and learning, the school environment and Collective Worship. Good use is being made of Information and Communications Technology throughout the school by members of staff. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support

learners and are given clear guidance to do so in planning. Teachers should consistently include them in a more meaningful role during the input of lessons. The governors are enthusiastic and are kept fully informed on matters relating to Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school through the Head Teacher's termly reports and through newsletters. They are very supportive, are regular visitors to school and discharge their responsibilities outstandingly.

**Grade: 1**

### **Catholic Life of the School**

There is outstanding leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school. There is a clear vision and direction for the Catholic life of the school that is shared with all members of the community. St Francis de Sales is a happy, welcoming, inclusive community in which the Gospel values permeate its life and work. This is apparent in the tangible ethos that exists and in the excellent relationships that have been established within the school. It is a community that strives to recognise, value and celebrate the contribution of all. A good Mission Statement, which expresses the philosophy of education in this school, is in place as are clear aims which emanate from it. The sentiments are lived out by all members of the community. The regular review of the statement has allowed the governors and staff to monitor the Catholic life of the school. At the next review, the statement should be scrutinised closely to ensure that it is a more accurate reflection of the vision that leaders have for this school and that it acknowledges all the wonderful work that goes on here. The current statement does not do the school justice. Children receive excellent care, guidance and support in a loving, friendly environment. They are nurtured by all members of the staff who prove to be excellent role models for the children in their care and respect for one another. Their success is celebrated each week as pupils strive to follow their own child-friendly Mission Statement. The spirit of the school's Mission Statement is reflected in their 'Golden Rules' for behaviour. All school policies and practises are firmly rooted in Gospel values. The children enjoy a wide variety of spiritual experiences including assemblies, prayer services, festivals, visits to church and the Metropolitan Cathedral. They are encouraged to look out for the needs of the less fortunate through e.g. collecting for CAFOD and the Nugent Care fund. Parents are welcome into school and are invited to all celebrations and Liturgies. The school works closely with the parish as they prepare children for the Sacrament of Eucharist. The parish priest is a regular welcome visitor who is a great friend to the school. The community showed their appreciation of him recently as he celebrated his Golden Jubilee.

**Grade: 1**

### **Collective Worship**

The quality of opportunities and experiences offered for Collective Worship are good. To fulfil government and Archdiocesan guidance, the school provides Collective Worship in a variety of ways for each child daily in class or

year group gatherings where the children are enabled to give glory, honour and praise to God, to celebrate life, learn more about values and experience community spirit. A Collective Worship policy has been produced but it needs to make clear the nature and purpose of Collective Worship. Guidelines are provided for prayer. Policies for the Spiritual and Moral development of pupils are in place. Acts of worship are organised in line with Archdiocesan guidance. Monitoring has taken place by the co-ordinator, and this should be continued and best practice shared. A simple focus for worship is provided in each classroom using suitable religious objects and resources. Additional adults that are present during worship are good role models and participate well. Collective Worship undertaken stimulates reflection on spiritual and moral issues and on personal beliefs. It makes an outstanding contribution to the children's spiritual and moral development. Participants are given the opportunities to be still, reflect, interact and respond in various ways. Excellent use is made of music and singing to enhance worship. Children respond well, are prayerful and respectful during Collective Worship and confidently share their opinions and views. They are being enabled to begin to organise parts of Collective Worship e.g. they are invited to choose suitable objects, cloths, pictures etc. for the focus table. Parents, carers, governors and friends of the school community are invited to take part in assemblies and services.

**Grade: 2**

## **Community Cohesion**

The school is outstanding in promoting community cohesion. St Francis de Sales is a truly inclusive community with a shared vision and commitment to serve the common good. Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all. The school encourages the children to begin to develop awareness and understanding of the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen in today's society. Collective Worship celebrates, reflects and respects the diversity of belief within the community. The use of the Religious Education Programme, '*Here I Am*', provides outstanding support to community cohesion. Learners have the opportunity to explore the beliefs and values of Other Faiths: Judaism and Islam. The children are given opportunities to learn about Christian festivals and festivals from other faiths and cultures. A Muslim student came to share her experiences and beliefs with the school community. Children from the school have visited a synagogue and the Metropolitan Cathedral. Parents, carers and governors are made aware of what is happening in the school community through regular newsletters. They are invited to a range of activities including induction, Sacramental preparation and curriculum meetings. The views and opinions of parents and carers are sought and welcomed. They are invited into school to participate in liturgies and celebrations. Close links have been established with the Junior School and this has facilitated the transition to the next key stage of learning. Links have been forged with other local schools through the Learning Network and local neighbourhood group. The parish priest and governors visit the school frequently and are well known to the adults and children. The school supports the parish very well in the

programme they provide for Year 2 pupils to prepare to receive their First Holy Communion. This has brought the school and parish communities closer together and has been well-received by pupils, parents and parishioners. The school community shows a concern for the well being of those less fortunate than themselves in their enthusiastic support of local, national and global charities e.g. in their donations to the 'Good Shepherd' fund for Nugent Care, selling poppies for Remembrance Day and by compiling shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child.

**Grade: 1**