



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. MARGARET MARY'S CATHOLIC JUNIOR SCHOOL

LIVERPOOL

Inspection Date	Tuesday 18 May 2010
Inspectors	Mrs. Marie Connolly Mr. Andrew Cocker Mrs Sheila Callaghan
Unique Reference Number	104482
Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005	

Type of School	Catholic Junior
Age range of pupils	7-11
Number on roll	450
Chair of Governors	Mrs Margaret Rawsthorne
Head teacher	Mr. Kevin Mahoney
School address	Pilch Lane, Liverpool. L14 0JG.
Telephone number	0151 477 8490
E-mail address	stmargaret@knowsley.gov.uk
Date of last inspection	12 June 2007

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2006.

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. Margaret Mary's is a larger than average Catholic Junior School serving the parish of St. Margaret Mary's Liverpool. There are currently 450 children on roll. 442 children are baptised Catholics, 4 come from other Christian denominations and 4 children attend the school from other religious traditions. There are 22 teachers in the school of which 17 are Catholic. Sixteen teach Religious Education. Eleven have a qualification in Religious Education. A new headteacher and subject leader have been appointed since the last inspection. The Religious Education subject leader and Collective Worship coordinator with the Parish Priest and headteacher have formed a team committed to raising the profile of Religious Education throughout the school.

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. Margaret Mary's is an outstanding Catholic school. It is an inclusive community, underpinned by an exceptionally strong Catholic ethos, which establishes a positive climate for work. The values of the Gospel very evidently underpin every aspect of school life. This is a school where the well being of every child is of paramount importance to the dedicated and hard working staff. Through the Mission Statement the school's philosophy of 'RESPECT' is shared. Displays and areas all around the school show how this is put into practice through a wide variety of initiatives. Excellent relationships exist. Staff show through their care and concern both for the children and each other that the 'Catholic ethos' is a tangible, living thing. All are made welcome. Achievement and standards overall are outstanding, some good. Overall, teaching and learning is outstanding. Where learning is good or outstanding children achieve well consistently and make outstanding progress throughout the school. A very small percentage of teaching is satisfactory. Assessment is providing clear guidance on learning. The curriculum is well planned. Learners' behaviour is exemplary.

The Religious Education curriculum meets well the needs and interests of learners, enabling them to make meaningful connections between life and faith. The provision for learners' spiritual and moral development is outstanding. Both curriculum Religious Education and Collective Worship make a significant contribution to this development. Creative and imaginative strategies have been employed to enable this to happen formally and informally. The Religious Education subject leader, supported by the Collective Worship coordinator and headteacher is exemplary in the manner in which she leads and manages Religious Education. The parish priest has been fully committed to supporting this team since the appointment of the new headteacher. This team work has had a tremendous impact on Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school generally. All recognise there is outstanding practice in the school but are realistic in appreciating the commitment and effort that enables such high achievement and standards to be achieved consistently, maintained and developed further. This commitment to ongoing development is shared by all. The provision for Collective Worship is outstanding. The school is outstanding in promoting community cohesion and has identified other initiatives for promoting this further. This is most evident in the manner in which the school serves the parish and local community.

Grade: 1

Improvement since the last inspection

The school was previously judged as very good with many outstanding features. Since then it has not only maintained the areas of excellence it has developed further. The planning and delivery of Collective Worship, monitoring of Religious Education and Collective Worship and general staff confidence in teaching the programme are the areas of most significant improvement. This outstanding improvement is the result of committed team work and people sharing a common vision. The school sets itself targets in order to maintain outstanding standards and meet fresh challenges. Any new

initiatives introduced by the Archdiocese are acted upon promptly and rigorously.

Grade: 1

Capacity to improve

The school's self-evaluation is outstanding. The judgements made in the document broadly match though some underestimate the judgements made in this report. Evidence was provided on the day of inspection that supported this document. The school clearly identifies areas for development and the strategies it intends to employ in order to improve further. Parents and governors are aware of and greatly appreciate the outstanding work being undertaken and the dedicated leadership that directs and guides every aspect of school life. The Religious Education subject leader and Collective Worship coordinator have a clear vision of what and how to improve and openness to new challenges. There is outstanding capacity for further improvement as shown by the shared commitment to Religious Education issues by all.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

The school needs to fully implement the development strategies still outstanding in its self-evaluation document. These include the ongoing use of the findings of assessment to inform differentiated planning, and the development of practical objectives to support the Mission Statement and its aims. Any minor issues contained in the body of the report, and any new initiatives introduced by the Archdiocese should be included when appropriate.

Achievement and standards

Children's attainment on entry to the school is broadly that expected but varies greatly. Overall children make outstanding progress in the school. Standards in Religious Education overall are outstanding with a significant amount good. Pupils meet the learning objectives and outcomes set, according to their age and stage of development. There is no difference in performance by pupils of different gender. Pupils with special needs make excellent progress in Religious Education with the support provided by excellent teaching assistants and differentiation of tasks to meet their needs. The school checks on the progress made by all through assessment and positive and some thought provoking marking. The school is aware of inconsistencies in provision and is working hard to ensure greater rigour throughout the school. Standards will continue to rise and further progress be made by the ongoing use of the information gathered through the monitoring of planning, teaching and learning and scrutiny of the formal assessments made each term. Greater use could be made of the findings of assessment when planning to meet the children's varying needs. Children show a developing confidence in discussion and feedback, and a real knowledge and understanding of the subject and its relevance in their lives. They show

enthusiasm for the subject when undertaking their work. One child commented about the subject – ‘All round brilliant with good challenges!’ The behaviour of children throughout the school is exemplary. The children are enabled to make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community through initiatives such as the school council which allows the children’s ‘voice’ to be taken into consideration. The children have a great sense of responsibility.

Grade: 1

Quality of Provision for Religious Education

Teaching and learning

Overall, the quality of provision for Religious Education is outstanding. A significant amount of the teaching observed and evidence in workbooks show much teaching and learning is outstanding, some good. A small percentage of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers show a real enthusiasm for the subject. The learning needs of all children, including those with additional needs, are addressed through the use of challenging and creative teaching and learning strategies, some differentiation of tasks and by excellent additional support provided by teaching assistants. Sharing outstanding practice through the monitoring process has enabled teachers to share where excellence in practice has been identified and will continue to enable staff to grow in confidence. Some excellent use is being made of Information Communication Technology by teachers. This helps to enliven the material being presented and was seen being used most effectively on the day of inspection e.g. use of notebook and PowerPoint presentations. Some well prepared resources enhanced the delivery of lessons. Teachers and assistants provide a most creative and stimulating environment which supports and challenges all children. Good planning and a clear understanding of the Religious Education programme direct and guide all staff. All teachers should indicate when planning which tasks are to be differentiated and for whom. Ongoing monitoring of planning, workbooks and lesson observations will ensure even greater consistency in teaching and learning across the school. The lessons observed had good pace and timing, which maintained the interest and concentration of learners and kept them on task and focussed. Pupils show a real sense of enjoyment whilst undertaking their work. Work is provided that enables pupils to work well independently and collaboratively. All teachers ensure that pupils understand the purpose of the lesson by sharing the learning objective at the start of the lesson and then re-visit it during the plenary session, enabling self assessment take place. Formal assessment procedures have been introduced that show clearly what progress is being made and that most children are meeting or exceeding the expectations in Religious Education. This information needs to inform future planning more rigorously.

Parents and carers involvement in the children’s Religious Education is outstanding. Parents and carers are enabled to become involved in their children’s Religious Education by the provision of regular detailed newsletters which outline activities relating to the religious life of the school, termly curriculum statements that make suggestions as to how parents can support

their children and curriculum meetings and reports informing them of children's progress. Beautiful displays and some focus areas in the school related to the children's work in Religious Education are another way of sharing the Catholic life of the school with parents, governors and visitors.

Grade: 1

Curriculum

The Religious Education curriculum is outstanding in meeting the needs and interests of pupils. 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. Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. The leadership of the school ensures suitable positioning of Religious Education on timetables. Although very good use is made of Information Communication Technology by teachers it would be good for children to use this more to support their work in Religious Education. Children's religious literacy is enhanced by the identification and use of the key words for each topic. Use of the appropriate driver words is supporting assessment.

Catholic beliefs and values are at the heart of learners' spiritual and moral development. There is evidence of this in every classroom and all around the school. It is very evident in the care that has been shown in creating the whole learning environment. Some beautiful displays, quiet areas for prayer and reflection, posters and photographs provide evidence of this excellent practice. Overall the Religious Education curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to learners' spiritual and moral development. Children have a good sense of right and wrong. The school has many pro-active initiatives to encourage the positive behaviour and moral development of all e.g. the buddy system, the 'RESPECT' philosophy and Star of the week. Teachers make the curriculum challenging and relevant by creating some stimulating resources. Children have a good understanding of the life and teaching of Jesus. Many creative strategies are used to enable them apply this teaching to their own lives. e.g. drama, role play, and other cross-curricular links. The work undertaken on *Other Faiths* has helped the children understand how others make sense of the world in which we live and also promotes tolerance and respect for those whose views differ from our own. Inviting visitors from other religious traditions helps the children make even greater sense of the diversity experienced in living in Britain today. The work undertaken to develop children's capacity for awe and wonder during the 'Awe and Wonder week' is another excellent initiative.

Grade: 1

Leadership and Management

Religious Education

Leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all children 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 even further. The Religious Education subject leader, Collective Worship coordinator supported by the headteacher and parish priest provide outstanding leadership and effective and efficient support to all staff. They have ensured through their continuous efforts that Religious Education is at the heart of everything in this Catholic school. Both coordinators show enthusiasm, flair and commitment. Some excellent documentation guides and directs all staff in their delivery of the subject. This also provides evidence of the quality of practice and achievement in Religious Education and associated whole school issues. Documentation is updated as necessary. Coordinators' meetings are attended regularly and information is disseminated to all staff during staff meetings or in-service time. Performance in Religious Education is monitored. A rolling programme is in place to ensure all staff have their work observed. Feedback and support is provided. The ongoing scrutiny of planning, workbooks and teaching and learning and effective use of the findings will enable even greater consistency and raise standards even further. Self-assessment is undertaken for each topic by staff and learners.

St. Margaret Mary's is socially inclusive by providing equality of access and of opportunity for all learners to make progress. Pastoral care is a real strength of the school. Excellent support is given to those children with additional learning needs. Of the 22 staff, 17 are Catholic. Sixteen teach Religious Education. Eleven have a suitable qualification in Religious Education. Others are encouraged to undertake the *Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies*. Priorities for the subject are identified and targets set. Funding for Religious Education is now very good. Some resources have been purchased or created by members of staff and are deployed to achieve high standards. Other resources such as the CD Rom's for God's Story and the Church's story need to be more widely used throughout the school to further develop the good use being made of interactive white boards, and other technology in Religious Education and Collective Worship. This will enhance provision and help raise standards even further. The presentation of the majority of classroom displays and focus tables is excellent. The headteacher, parish priest and coordinators keep the governors informed on matters relating to Religious Education. Governors discharge their responsibilities effectively and are supportive of the school in matters relating to Religious Education and other associated whole school issues. A link governor has been appointed for Religious Education.

Grade: 1

Catholic Life of the School

The leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school through the Mission Statement are outstanding. It is a community that

believes and lives its mission. St. Margaret Mary's is an inclusive community in which the Gospel Spirit of love, care and mutual respect permeates every aspect of its life and work. Excellent relationships exist. Enthusiasm and commitment permeates the school. The Mission Statement has not been reviewed since the appointment of the new headteacher. It would now be a good time to do so. At the same time it would be important to develop a set of practical objectives that flow from the Mission Statement and its aims that show how the mission is being put into practice daily in school. The Mission Statement and the children's motto are displayed as you enter the school, in classrooms and other places around the school. It should be included in all policies and plans. In this way it is made clear to all that it is the 'key' document in this Catholic school. Its aims direct and guide every aspect of school life. St. Margaret Mary's is a real community aspiring to achieve the best for all.

Grade: 1

Collective Worship

The quality of opportunities and experiences offered for Collective Worship are outstanding. This has been an area of significant improvement since the last inspection and is now a real strength of the school. The appointment of a Collective Worship coordinator has been key to this improvement. The school provides Collective Worship in a variety of ways for each child daily, in class and whole school gatherings. This fulfils government and Archdiocesan guidance. Guidelines that support the planning and delivery of Collective Worship wherever and whenever it takes place have been produced including a simple format for planning. Evidence of a wide variety of acts of Collective Worship has been collated. Collective Worship stimulates reflection on spiritual and moral issues and on personal beliefs. A focus for worship is provided in each classroom using suitable religious objects and artefacts. Most are of a high quality. Some focus tables are used very effectively for both Collective Worship and also during lessons. Children are encouraged to participate in a meaningful manner both in class and larger gatherings through prayer, poetry, song, dance, mime symbolic action etc. This enriches their experience. All teachers ensure time is given to individual reflection during Collective Worship and help children develop skills which enhance this. Creativity is used to support learners' ongoing spiritual and moral development during acts of Collective Worship e.g. use of different types of prayer, music and symbol. The collective acts of worship observed on the day of inspection were inspirational and uplifting. Both were enhanced by the beautiful focus for worship. Both were very gentle and deeply spiritual and enabled the children to participate fully in different ways. A programme of liturgical celebrations is planned and these take place throughout the year. Mass is sometimes celebrated. Parents, governors and friends of the school community are invited to a variety of assemblies and services. This is greatly appreciated and governors spoke about how moving the acts of worship are, particularly those held during Holy week. Acts of worship have been provided for governors. A variety of inservice has been provided that has supported the planning and delivery of Collective Worship both by staff, the parish priest and external agencies. This has included music for liturgical celebrations, prayer and worship and has given the staff greater confidence. The children

now need to be given further opportunities to plan and deliver acts of worship themselves.

Grade: 1

Community Cohesion

The school is outstanding in promoting community cohesion. The leadership of the school is clearly dedicated to enabling this to happen. There is a shared vision and commitment to serve the common good. Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities. The school works in partnership with 6 other schools in the extended community some of other Faith backgrounds and one special school. Parents, carers and children are involved in the decision making and life of the school. The children are enabled to make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community through initiatives such as the school council which allows the children's 'voice' to be taken into consideration. The children have a great sense of responsibility. They have been given great experiences meeting with local school councils. They understand the term cohesion and use it appropriately. They have had input from a variety of environmental agencies, emergency services, transport etc and have led initiatives for recycling, anti-bullying, playground buddies etc.

The home, school and parish partnership is excellent. The school endeavours to support the life of faith with parents and the parish in a variety of ways e.g. through newsletters, during times of sacramental preparation and also social activities. All are invited to attend appropriate events and celebrations. Collective Worship celebrates, reflects and respects diversity.

The use of the Religious Education Programme, *Here I Am*, supports well community cohesion. Children have explored the beliefs and values of other faiths. This helps promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently. The school continues to identify and develop strategies for strengthening community links even further e.g. inviting visitors from other world religions to speak. It would be good for the school to arrange visits when possible to places of worship e.g. the synagogue, to enable children to further deepen their knowledge and understanding of these communities. The school has a clear sense of its mission in reaching out to those who are less fortunate supporting a variety of local, national and international charities both by becoming better informed and by raising funds and resources e.g. CAFOD, Marie Curie and Nugent Care. The school has also made links with a local nursing home. The children have participated in a variety of activities along with the residents.

Grade: 1