



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

BLUNDELLSANDS

A Section 23 Report from the Department for Christian Education

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL
BLUNDELLSANDS

Names of Inspectors:

Mrs. Marie Connolly

Mrs. Ann Coffey

Date of Inspection:

23 November 2004

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Copies of this Report may be obtained from the Governors of the School.

INTRODUCTION

Its purpose was to report on:

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- Standards
- Teaching and learning
- Pupils' response
- Curriculum
- Leadership and management

WHOLE SCHOOL ASPECTS

- Mission Statement
- Collective Worship
- Spiritual and Moral Development

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 THE SCHOOL

Name of School:	St. Mary's College Preparatory School
Type of School:	Independent
School Category:	Primary
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Headteacher:	Mr. M. Collins
Address of School:	Blundellsands Road West, Blundellsands, Liverpool, L23 6TF.
Telephone:	0151 924 6302
Fax:	0151 932 0450
Chair of Governors:	Professor T. Bell

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Mary's College Preparatory is an independent primary school whose pupils are drawn from several parishes, which feeds St. Mary's College Independent Secondary College. There are 201 pupils aged 4-11 on roll. Pupils come from supportive home backgrounds. One hundred and fifty six pupils are baptised Catholic, 35 pupils come from other Christian denominations and one from an *Other Faith* tradition. There are 10 full-time and 7 part-time teachers employed by the school. Nine teachers teach Religious Education, 10 are Catholic. Two pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

The current targets set by the school in relation to Religious Education are to:

- create a specific development plan for Religious Education;
- evaluate planning and monitor teaching;
- encourage staff attendance on topic days;
- create a new Mission Statement that is primary age appropriate;
- provide in-service to support the planning and delivery of Collective Worship.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school in regard to Religious Education.

MAIN STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL

- The standard achieved in Religious Education is very good.
- The school ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child through the delivery of the *Here I Am* programme.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is very good.
- The time allocated to Religious Education is very good.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to their work and respond well when challenged.
- Leadership and management in Religious Education are very good.
- The Religious Education coordinator fulfils her role with enthusiasm and commitment.
- There is a shared commitment to, and promotion of the Catholic ethos of the school and the principles founded by Blessed Edmund Rice.
- Relationships are excellent. Mutual care, love and respect are features of the school.
- Opportunities provided for the spiritual and moral development of pupils are very good.
- Behaviour and discipline are excellent.
- There is a very good home and school partnership that is well supported by both the school chaplain and the local parish priest.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Monitoring and assessment of Religious Education to enable the very good practice to be shared, ensure greater consistency and further raise standards.
- The provision of in-service to enable greater creativity and imagination in the planning and delivery of the seven-fold process of *Here I Am* and Collective Worship.
- Enable the whole school community, including the children, to review the Mission Statement and produce a set of clear aims and practical objectives that flow from the Mission Statement showing how it informs the daily life of the school.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is the first time the school has been inspected under the Archdiocesan framework for inspection.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEW OF THE SCHOOL

Sixty-seven parents returned the questionnaire. Overall parents' response to the questions asked was extremely positive.

All parents commenting are happy with the values and attitudes the school teaches, how they are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school, feel that their children are happy and that they are made welcome. Parents feel that the school

enables their children to achieve a good standard of work in Religious Education. Nine parents would like more information about their children's progress in Religious Education and five parents would like a clearer understanding of what is taught in Religious Education.

Seventy pupil questionnaires were returned. Fifty-one pupils from Year 6 and 19 pupils from Year 2 returned the questionnaire.

All pupils made positive comments. A few stated that they would like their *Here I Am* lessons to be more interesting and fun. When commenting on what they liked most about the school, pupils stated their teachers, friends and sport are the most important. A few pupils would like a larger playground with more plants but the majority like the school just as it is.

SCHOOL'S SELF-REVIEW

The school has completed the self-review document very well. It has a very good understanding of its own strengths in Religious Education and has clearly identified areas for further development and the strategies for implementing them.

STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The standard achieved in Religious Education is very good.

QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is very good.

PUPILS' RESPONSE

Pupils have very good attitudes to their work, respond well when challenged and show enjoyment of Religious Education.

PROVISION FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The school ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child through the delivery of the *Here I Am* programme. The time allocated to Religious Education is very good. The financial allocation to Religious Education is good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership and management in Religious Education are very good. The Religious Education coordinator shows a real commitment to, and enthusiasm for the subject and supports the headteacher in ensuring the status of Religious Education is maintained throughout the school.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission Statement provides a good expression of the school's vision of Catholic education. A simplified statement for the children would enable it to be known and owned by the whole school community.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The quality and provision of daily acts of worship is good.

SPIRITUAL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Opportunities provided for pupils' spiritual and moral development are very good.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How high are standards in Religious Education? How well do pupils achieve?

1. The standard achieved in Religious Education is very good. Most pupils meet and some exceed the expectations outlined in the *Here I Am* programme. The school plans to use the formal assessment sheets provided by the Archdiocese. The information collated on these sheets will inform future planning and help to raise standards further.
2. Pupils with additional needs make good progress in Religious Education through the provision of some differentiated tasks and support provided.
3. There are no significant differences in standards achieved by pupils of different gender or ethnic background.
4. Planning, lesson and workbook observations, discussions with pupils from Year 2 and Year 6, together with discussions with pupils during lessons show that pupils are growing in their knowledge and understanding of the teachings, beliefs, values and way of life of Catholic Christianity and of *Other Faith* traditions explored in the *Here I Am* programme. Pupils understood the messages of the topics and could relate them to their own life experiences e.g. the topic *Myself* helped pupils understand how their different qualities can be used in the service of others.
5. Pupils are able to communicate their knowledge and understanding in a variety of appropriate forms including various forms of written work. Greater variety, creativity and individual response should be encouraged.
6. Pupils have started to understand the human search for meaning and purpose and are able to identify some of the questions it raises and of the answers that the Church has given to those questions e.g. the current topic *Birthdays* enables the children focus on the question 'Where do I come from?' and the Church's response of faith in the doctrine of Creation: God's Word of Love creates all things. The fullest revelation of this mystery is Jesus, born to show God to the world.

How effective are teaching and learning in Religious Education?

7. The quality of teaching in Religious Education is very good. This makes a significant impact on pupils' learning.
8. Planning and classroom teaching indicate that teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of Religious Education and of the *Here I Am* programme. Teachers need further support with planning to ensure that all the content listed on the pointers for short-term planning are all included. Staff should be provided with in-service to enable greater creativity and imagination in the planning and delivery of the seven-fold process. Opportunities should be provided to share good practice e.g. the use of poetry and art, strategies such as 'advice/question alley' and the use of literacy strategies when analysing scripture. When teachers' expectations are high and pupils challenged, their knowledge, skills and understanding are deepened.
9. Teachers use teaching and learning strategies that match the learning objectives and needs of most pupils. Some use is made of differentiation but this

needs to be made clear when planning. More use should be made of open-ended learning and extension activities provided to support more able pupils. Pupils should also be given the opportunity to use the key words for each topic in their work, thus improving their religious literacy. Teachers should inform pupils of the learning objective at the start of a lesson and revisit it during the plenary.

10. Teachers manage pupils very well and excellent standards of behaviour are achieved. Mutual care and respect are features of the school. This was observed throughout the inspection.

11. Lessons showed evidence of good time management. Resources, including human resources are used efficiently and effectively. Greater use could be made of information communication technology.

12. Where appropriate, homework is used to support and reinforce what is learned in class. This supports the partnership between home and school.

13. Pupils are acquiring new knowledge and skills and are developing and increasing their understanding in Religious Education e.g. during the current topic pupils were learning how to make an Advent Wreath. By discussing the various parts of the wreath their understanding of its symbolism increased as did their understanding of Advent, the Church's time set aside to prepare for the feast of Christmas.

14. There is evidence of prior learning being consolidated and being applied in new contexts, for example using data on qualities pupils possessed and comparing it to the qualities of the Messiah in Isaiah.

15. Pupils demonstrate creativity in their work e.g. recording in small books, cards etc.

16. Most pupils work at a good pace and work productively. They show interest in their work in Religious Education and are able to sustain concentration.

17. Pupils are developing the skills that enable them to work well independently and collaboratively. This was observed during the inspection e.g. working in pairs highlighting text.

18. Teachers need to formally assess pupils' work regularly. There is evidence of some constructive and supportive marking in pupils' workbooks. This needs to be developed. The Religious Education coordinator needs to ensure that this good practice is shared after monitoring workbooks. The comments made on the planning sheets of those pupils exceeding or not meeting expectations should be used to inform future planning. The expectation statements should then be used to report pupils' progress to their parents. A portfolio of assessed work, plus some photographic evidence should also be kept by the Religious Education coordinator as a useful record of practice and achievement throughout the school.

19. Pupils understand how well they are doing in Religious Education, are affirmed and are informed by teachers of ways in which they can improve. Pupils are taught how to evaluate their own work in a variety of ways. Teachers' should make effective use of the findings.

How well do pupils respond to Religious Education?

20. Pupils respond very well and show real enjoyment of Religious Education. They apply themselves productively to their work are able to sustain concentration and show interest in what they are doing.

21. Throughout the lessons observed pupils were able to form constructive relationships with others and respect their views. The collaborative activities observed were undertaken well in pairs and small groups. Pupils were observed showing initiative and taking responsibility e.g. being spokesperson. This provided evidence of their confidence and self-esteem.

22. Pupils were polite and courteous throughout the inspection. They showed through their actions that they know what constitutes appropriate behaviour.

How good is the provision for the curriculum in Religious Education?

23. 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.

24. The time allocated to Religious Education is at least 10% of total curriculum time in all classes. This is very good and fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales.

25. All but three of those teaching Religious Education possess a suitable qualification in Religious Education. Suitable arrangements are in place for the induction of teachers. Ongoing professional development has been identified as an area for improvement by the school.

26. The school provides a good learning environment for pupils. There is a focus for worship with relevant artefacts and sacred objects in each classroom and other places around the school. Children's work is displayed in classrooms and around the school showing how much the work is valued. Some good use is made of photographic evidence.

27. Teachers have a variety of resources for teaching Religious Education. These need to be updated regularly as funding allows. The provision of *God's Story* and ritual objects to support the *Other Faith* units of work have been the most recent acquisitions. The provision of the *God's Story CD Rom* would enable greater use to be made of information communication technology.

28. The Mount is socially inclusive by providing equality of access and of opportunity for all pupils to make progress. This is undertaken by some differentiation of tasks, additional support etc. The support of those with disabilities is undertaken with great care and consideration.

How effective and efficient are the leadership and management in Religious Education?

29. Leadership and management in Religious Education are very good. The Religious Education coordinator shows a real commitment to, and enthusiasm for the subject and supports the headteacher in ensuring the status of Religious Education is maintained throughout the school.

30. A handbook and other documentation guides and directs all staff in their delivery of Religious Education. This should be updated stating the specific practice in the school. The coordinator has tried to ensure all recent initiatives have been implemented. In-service has already been requested to address various issues identified in this report.

31. There is a shared commitment between all of those teaching Religious Education to the subject's aims and values. This is inspired and motivated by the coordinator. The headteacher keeps governors informed on matters relating to Religious Education. Parents are informed of these matters through the governors' report to parents and pupils' reports. Information on curriculum Religious Education is to be included in the curriculum newsletter, providing parents with information about what is to be covered in Religious Education and ways in which they can support their child at home. This is good.

32. The Religious Education coordinator has attended coordinators' meetings and information is disseminated to all staff during staff meetings or in-service time.

33. Priorities for the development of the subject are identified and appropriate resources are allocated. The school's self-review document should continue to be used annually for this purpose.

34. The Religious Education coordinator in future will be responsible for monitoring teaching and learning in a variety of ways. The assessment sheets used by the Archdiocese would support this process. This will prove effective in guiding teaching staff and in sharing good practice.

35. The provision of in-service to enable greater creativity and imagination in the planning and delivery of the seven-fold process and Collective Worship, share good practice and further raise standards, should continue as part of the ongoing professional development of staff.

36. The financial allocation for Religious Education is good. Resources are well managed by the Religious Education coordinator.

WHOLE SCHOOL ASPECTS

How effective is the Mission Statement in the life and work of the school?

37. There is a shared commitment to, and promotion of the Catholic ethos of the school and the principles founded by Blessed Edmund Rice. The school motto 'Fidem Vita Fateri' – "may our faith show in our lives" clearly underpins all that takes place in this school.

38. The Mission Statement provides a good expression of the school's vision of Catholic education. It states how the school encourages the development of the whole person, making Christ a reality in school life. A set of aims explaining how the Mission Statement is to be implemented form part of the statement. A simplified statement for the children would enable it to be known and owned by the whole school community.

39. It would be good to enable the whole school community including the children to review the Mission Statement. A set of practical objectives that flow from the Mission Statement could then be developed, showing how the mission informs the daily life of the school.

40. The Mission Statement and children's interpretations could be displayed in classrooms and around the school to raise its profile.

41. Relationships are excellent. Mutual care, love and respect are features of the school. This was witnessed throughout the inspection.

How good is the quality of Collective Worship?

42. The school provides Collective Worship in a variety of ways for each child daily, in class, key stage and whole school gatherings. This fulfils government and Archdiocesan guidance. Collective Worship stimulates reflection on spiritual and moral issues and on personal beliefs, and contributes to the liturgical formation of pupils. Mass, services and celebration assemblies are held at various times during the school year e.g. the Carol Service. This was being prepared for during the inspection. The singing was superb. Parents are invited to all celebrations.

43. In-service to support teachers' planning and delivery of Collective Worship is planned. This will help develop creativity and imagination and also enable good practice to be shared.

44. The acts of Collective Worship observed contained many good features. They provided an enriching religious experience for all concerned. They took into account of the age, ability and background of the pupils. Participation and response were encouraged from pupils. Collective Worship promotes a common ethos, shared values, positive attitudes and community spirit e.g. through the consideration of the start of the liturgical year and sharing scripture. Opportunities were provided for personal reflection and silent prayer.

45. Collective Worship is held in classrooms and school hall. The presence of staff at Collective Worship bears witness to its importance to pupils. A variety of resources are used depending on the topic being considered. There is a suitable focus

for worship provided in each classroom and other places around the school. These are changed regularly to reflect the topic. The development of a prayer room is planned.

46. The school is fortunate to have a chaplain as well as a local parish priest. Both priests are involved in supporting teachers, parents and pupils in a variety of ways. This is very good.

47. The school supports parents in their preparation of children for the Sacraments. Eucharist and Reconciliation topics are covered each year in a developmental and progressive manner. Meetings are held with parents.

How effective is the school's provision for the spiritual and moral development of its pupils and how well do they respond to it?

48. Opportunities provided for the spiritual and moral development of pupils are very good. Policy statements are in place to support this. Practical objectives should be included with these policies that show the practical ways in which pupils are helped.

49. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect upon and find meaning in everyday experiences. They are developing a sense of the transcendent and of God in their lives. They are encouraged to reflect on and respond to God's presence. This is undertaken in both Religious Education lessons and Collective Worship. The lighting of candles and playing gentle music helps this.

50. In both Religious Education lessons and Collective Worship pupils are given opportunities to consider how the teachings of the Church provide insights into, and explanations for the fundamental questions of existence e.g. reflecting on how God calls us to belong to the Church and what is involved in responding to this invitation. Children have responded in their wholehearted support of various charities e.g. Operation Christmas Child, Pennies for Africa, the National Children's Home Collection, Jospice and funding a child to Lourdes to name a few. Year 6 pupils benefit by taking part in a time of retreat at Sandymount house of prayer. A memorial garden has been established to help pupils remember a past pupil who died. This is very good and was commented on by pupils in their questionnaire. Media coverage of pupils' achievement is displayed for all to see in the main office.

51. Pupils are developing the range depth and quality of their prayer life e.g. during the Collective Worship observed children prayed formally and informally and were encouraged to offer their own prayers. Prayers are prayed at various times during the school day. The Edmund Rice prayer group meets weekly. This is an excellent way in which those involved bring to life the vision of the founder. During the inspection the Principal of the school shared her mission experience with the group using a power point slide presentation and making use of various artefacts from her journey. This was an excellent opportunity for those present to find out about the beliefs and practices of a different culture.

52. Through their work on *Other Faiths* pupils are learning about how some other people respond to the spiritual dimension of life. The children spoke positively about the work they had undertaken. This will continue to be developed.

53. The school provides a secure community, which promotes high moral principles, and behaviour, which help pupils to distinguish right from wrong. It enables pupils to develop a personal sense of morality in relation to themselves, others in their family, the school and the local community and in relation to national and world issues. The school code of conduct supports this. This was clearly evident through the courtesy and respect shown to visitors throughout the inspection.

54. The school bases its moral teaching on the gospels and the teaching of the Church and communicates these to pupils as the foundation of their moral judgements and actions. The policies in place especially those concerning Anti-Bullying, Special Educational Needs, the Code of Conduct Inclusion, Personal Social and Health Education and Citizenship all serve to reinforce these teachings.

What should the school do to improve further?

Specific matters which the governors and staff should include in its post-inspection action plan, listed in order of their importance:

- monitoring and assessment of Religious Education to enable the very good practice to be shared, ensure greater consistency and further raise standards;
- the provision of in-service to enable greater creativity and imagination in the planning and delivery of the seven-fold process of *Here I Am* and Collective Worship;
- enable the whole school community, including the children to review the Mission Statement, produce a set of clear aims and practical objectives that flow from the Mission Statement showing how it informs the daily life of the school.

Areas for development identified in the report which are not included in matters for action but which should be considered by the school:

- * use information from formal assessment to inform planning; (1)
- * greater variety in recording work; (5)
- * development of short-term planning; (8)
- * inform pupils of key words and learning objectives; (9)
- * greater use of differentiation; (9)
- * greater use of information communication technology; (11)
- * keeping a portfolio of assessed work; (18)
- * constructive marking of pupils' work. (18)

DATA AND INDICATORS

PUPILS

Number of pupils in each year group:

Reception	16
Year 1	20
Year 2	21
Year 3	25
Year 4	25
Year 5	43
Year 6	<u>51</u>
	201

Number of Catholic pupils: 156

Percentage of pupils from each parish:

St. Joseph's, Blundellsands	20%
Ss. Peter and Paul's Crosby	20%
Others	38%

Number of pupils from other Christian denominations: 35

Number of pupils from other faith traditions: 1

Number of pupils having a statement of special educational needs: 2

TEACHERS AND CLASSES

Total number of teachers: 10 Full-time 7 Part-time

Number of teachers teaching Religious Education: 9

Number of Catholic teachers in the school: 10

Number of classes: 9

Organisation of the school into classes:

Reception x1
Year 1 x1
Year 2 x1
Year 3 x1
Year 4 x1
Year 5 x2
Year 6 x2

Average class size in key stages:

Foundation Stage: 16
Key Stage 1: 20
Key Stage 2: 24

TEACHING TIME

Total teaching time per week:

Reception: 23 hours 45mins
Key Stage 1: 23 hours 45mins
Key Stage 2: 24 hours 10mins

Total Religious Education teaching time per week:

Reception: 2 hours 45mins
Key Stage 1: 2 hours 30mins
Key Stage 2: 2 hours 30mins

Percentage of total teaching time per week spent on Religious Education: 10% +

FINANCIAL DATA

	Current Financial Year	Last Financial Year
	£	£
Religious Education	500	300
English	500	450
Mathematics	600	500
Science	300	200

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEW OF THE SCHOOL

What parents like about the school

- The values and attitudes the school teaches.
- The encouragement parents are given to play an active part in the life of the school.
- The welcome they receive in school.
- The understanding parents are given of what is taught in Religious Education.
- The good standards of work achieved in Religious Education.
- The information available on children's progress in Religious Education.
- The happiness of their children in school.

What some parents are not happy about

- Nine parents would like more information about their children's progress in Religious Education.
- Five parents would like a clearer understanding of what is taught in Religious Education.

Sixty-seven parents returned the questionnaire. Overall parents' response to the questions asked was extremely positive. Parents are invited to parents' meetings and reports are sent home annually. Information related to Religious Education is also included in the governors' reports to parents. The Religious Education coordinator includes information about the *Here I Am* topics on the curriculum planner.

What children like most about their school

- All pupils made positive comments. When commenting on what they liked most about the school, pupils stated their teachers, friends and sport are the most important.

What children would like to change about their school

- A few stated that they would like their *Here I Am* lessons to be more interesting and fun. A few pupils would like a larger playground with more plants but the majority like the school just as it is.

Seventy pupil questionnaires were returned. Nineteen pupils from Year 2 and 51 pupils from Year 6 returned the questionnaire.

SUMMARY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION INSPECTION REPORT

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Blundellsands

Headteacher: Mr. M. Collins

Date of Inspection: 23 November 2004

Inspectors: Mrs. Marie Connolly Mrs. Ann Coffey

This is a summary of the Inspectors' full report which can be obtained from the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

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OVERALL EVALUATION

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THE PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

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The Governing Body is responsible for drawing up an ACTION PLAN within 40 working days of receiving the report, showing what the school is going to do about the issues. This action plan will be circulated to all parents of pupils at the school.

