



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

SKELMERSDALE

Inspection Date 9 May 2018

Inspectors Mrs Pat Peel Mr. Andy Cocker

Unique Reference Number 134598

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

Type of School Catholic Primary

Age range of pupils 3 - 11 (provision for 13 - 2 Year olds)

Number on roll 212

Chair of Governors Mrs. Mary Reid

Headteacher Mr. Terry Naylor

School address Blakehall
Skelmersdale
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Date of last inspection June 2013

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. Francis of Assisi is a larger than average sized Catholic Primary School situated in Skelmersdale serving the parish of St. Richard's.
- There are 212 children on roll of whom 102 are baptised Catholic, 107 come from other Christian denominations and 1 from other faith or religious traditions. 2 have no religious affiliation.
- There are fourteen teachers. Ten of which teach Religious Education. Ten teachers are baptised Catholic. Seven teachers have a suitable qualification in Religious Education.
- Since the last inspection the Religious Education subject leader has been promoted from Assistant Headteacher to Deputy Headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

St. Francis' is an Outstanding school in providing Catholic Education.

CATHOLIC LIFE

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 truly appreciate, value and actively participate in the Catholic Life at St. Francis'. They know, own and live out their Mission Statement, *'We love and grow in Christ, we live and learn in partnership, we build and share together,'* every day. The children also sing it heartily as it is set to a familiar tune.
- Pupils show a deep respect for themselves and others as made in the image and likeness of God. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary and the *'Good to be Green'* initiative is used to support this. In proportion to their years they show an ability to listen, to give thanks, to forgive and be forgiven. They are quick to congratulate others and have a very good understanding of right and wrong.
- Pupils enthusiastically embrace the demands that members of the school community entails such as becoming school councillors, collective worship councillors and playground buddies.
- They take a leading role in those activities which promote the schools' Catholic Life and mission both within school and in the wider community such as fundraising for numerous charities e.g. CAFOD, *Nugent, St. Vincent de Paul Society and Water Aid* to name but a few. Within the locality they have supported *Blossom's Legacy* a charity set up by parents of a child who attended the school who tragically died in a drowning accident and supporting Ava, another child in the school, who raised money for *Hugs for Winter* an online based charity providing blankets for homeless people. Globally, they have supported a school in Tanzania by writing letters and fund raising. They are alert to the needs of others and seek justice for all.
- Pupils value and fully participate in opportunities provided by the school including a range of after school clubs such as culture club, chess, dance, tennis, knitting, science and a host of seasonal sports.
- Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development they have an outstanding sense of belonging. As a result, they are happy, confident and secure in their own stage of physical, emotional and spiritual growth. On the day of inspection, a child in Year 6 commented that, *"Resources in our school are brilliant and by coming here you learn and develop. The teachers become your best friends and you will always remember them!"*
- The choir performs at school and community events including singing at local residential homes and Midstream Garden Centre.
- Pupils, appropriate to their age and capability, have recently begun relationships and sexual development within the context of a Christian understanding but this is in its infancy and needs to be embedded further into school life.
- Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 have actively participated in a visit to London and have the opportunity to undertake a residential visit to *Tower Wood Activity Centre* in Cumbria beside Lake Windermere.

- Pupils enthusiastically embrace a holistic approach to education, understand what it means to have a vocation and recognise the importance of using their gifts in the service of others. Pupils are rewarded with Star of the Week certificates. Pupils are also invited to have 'afternoon tea' with the Headteacher.
- Pupils value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and its links with the parish community and the Archdiocese. As a result, they respect and are involved with parish celebrations and activities, irrespective of their own faith commitments. Pupils attend their local church and have attended the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King during Advent.
- Pupils have contributed to the planning, development and use of a prayer garden dedicated to Sr. Monica Feehan who supported the school. Trees have been planted in memory of a member of staff and a child as well as a dedicated prayerful sacred space in the entrance porch.
- Pupils feel able to express a pride in their own religious and cultural identity and beliefs.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.
- The school Mission Statement, '*We love and grow in Christ, we live and learn in partnership, we build and share together,*' its aims and objectives are a clear expression of the educational mission of the Church. It underpins every aspect of school life at St. Francis'.
- All staff are fully committed to its implementation across the curriculum. They enthusiastically participate in school activities which reflect the Catholic Life and mission of the school.
- There is a keen sense of community at all levels, evident in the high quality of relationships and the centrality of prayer to the whole community. The school is an extremely supportive and joyful community.
- The school environment reflects its mission and identity through concrete and effective signs of the school's Catholic character. The displays, classroom focus' and sacred reflective spaces all create an overwhelming yet calm ambience which exudes St. Francis' catholicity and ethos. This is tangible throughout the school.
- Staff promote high standards of behaviour and are exemplary role models of mutual respect and forgiveness for pupils inside and outside of the classroom.
- The entire curriculum reflects a commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, to care for our common home and to the dignity of every human person through its fundraising, eco stewardship and numerous outreach opportunities. This is a real strength in the school.
- The school provides opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of all pupils and staff through prayer and continuous professional development opportunities such as attendance at Archdiocesan in-service days and accessing training.
- Clear policies and structures are in place, which provide the highest levels of pastoral care for pupils, and there is an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable and needy in both policy and practice. The Inclusion Manager, learning mentors, pastoral support team and the well-being team are extremely effective and highly valued in the school community.
- The school is equally attentive to the pastoral needs of members of staff and pupils and ensures that every member's needs are understood and catered for. The school has both a nurture 'Rainbow' room and a sensory room which is used extensively by pupils who need some extra support.
- The school holds their own foodbank collection and the parish *St. Vincent de Paul Society* and Parents, Teachers and Friends Association all aid families in the community that need support.

- Catechists recruited from the parish, staff and governors support the pupils and their families undertaking the With You Always Sacramental programme.
- All the relevant documentation is in place and the school has made a commitment to support Relationships and Sex Education alongside Personal, Social and Health Education. This is an area the school has recognised needs to be further developed over the coming year to embed it fully.
- The school provides before and after school provision throughout the year. This is popular and well attended

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- Leaders and governors are outstanding in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- The schools' leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. Leaders are energised by the task and are a source of inspiration for the whole community. The development of the Catholic Life of the school is viewed by leaders and governors as a core leadership responsibility.
- The provision for the Catholic Life of the school is given priority by leaders and is reflected in the school's self-evaluation document which is a coherent reflection of monitoring, analysis and self-challenge and is clearly focused on the Catholic Life of the school.
- Relationships at every level are outstanding. The school operates exclusively as one team, and this is the key to its success.
- Continuous Professional Development focusing on the Catholic Life of the school occurs and is effective. As a result, staff understanding of the school's mission is outstanding. Staff are involved in shaping and supporting it.
- The school has successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers to the benefit of pupils, including those who might traditionally find working with the school difficult. The school offers an open-door policy, meeting space, sends out regular newsletters and has a website. As a result, parents and carers have an outstanding understanding of the school's mission and are supportive of it. One commented, *"My child thoroughly enjoys going to St. Francis'. I have particularly chosen this school for my daughter based upon the good, solid values and attitudes that are taught and promoted throughout the school and our community."*
- There is a very active Parents, Teachers and Friends Association who organise fundraising activities to support the needs of the school.
- As leaders, the governing body is highly ambitious for the Catholic Life of the school and leads by example in the way it emphasises Catholic Life as a school improvement priority. Many of the governors are active in the parish and they make a valuable contribution to the Catholic Life of the school. They are very supportive to the school's mission.
- Governor's have given their unequivocal support to enable the Headteacher to share his expertise in working with and supporting other schools across the Archdiocese. His drive, passion, and commitment in living out the Gospel values and sharing the Good News with others is commendable. He is an inspirational leader in the school.
- The school responds well to Archdiocesan policies and initiatives and promotes the Archdiocesan vision for the Archdiocese throughout the school.
- Leaders and governors have made a commitment to further develop Relationships and Sex Education throughout the school alongside Personal, Social and Health Education.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- The extent to which pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding.
- Pupils, from their varied starting points, make excellent progress in each key stage.
- Groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are also making progress comparable to the progress of other pupils.
- Pupils, relative to their age and capacity, are religiously literate and engaged young people; they use their knowledge, understanding and skills, to reflect spiritually, and to think ethically and theologically. Pupils are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.
- Pupils are actively engaged in lessons and are committed to improving their knowledge, understanding and skills to further develop as competent learners.
- Pupils concentrate well and understand how well they are doing. This can be improved further by teachers using the language of the level descriptors i.e. driver words routinely during lessons and when questioning to challenge pupils thinking.
- Pupils approach their lessons with interest and enthusiasm. This was evident as pupils quickly settled to tasks and responded positively throughout. This was particularly evident in Year 4 where pupils were challenged to build a bridge from a variety of materials including spaghetti and straws. Pupils were audibly whooping with excitement during the lesson.
- Pupils enjoy a range of activities and respond well to opportunities which extend their learning. Behaviour for learning is exemplary because pupils enjoy Religious Education and disruptions in lessons are unusual.
- The quality of pupils' current work, both in class and in written work, is outstanding. Pupils take pride in their workbooks and the presentation is of a very high standard.
- Pupils' are undertaking formal assessment in line with Archdiocesan guidance and evidence kept.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.
- On the day of inspection there was some outstanding practice observed with nothing less than good. Teachers need to use the language of the level descriptors i.e. driver words more as part of their repertoire.
- Staff are using the Archdiocesan template for planning Religious Education, but these could be improved further by becoming more succinct.
- Some teachers plan very good lessons and do use the language of the level descriptors i.e. driver words, but not enough is linked to pupils' current on-going assessment. This best practise needs to be shared.
- Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and have a very good understanding of how pupils learn. Staff need to provide more opportunities for greater depth and challenge by using the driver words throughout lessons.
- Teachers employ a range of appropriate strategies, including individual, paired and collaborative work. Consequently, pupils are inspired, motivated and concentrate extremely well in lessons.
- In books there is evidence of continuity in lessons and across sequences of lessons. Parents are routinely invited to the Rejoice celebration assembly aspect of the topics.

- In the best lessons observed teachers used questioning techniques very well. They adapted explanations using the language of the level descriptors i.e. driver words catering for the needs of all pupils.
- High quality resources e.g. Come and See website, God's and Church's Story, audio and visual media, laptops and iPads etc. are employed to engage pupils in their learning.
- Other adults are used very effectively to optimise learning for pupils who need their support. They are a real strength in the school.
- Evidence in books shows that marking is always positive but not always linked to the lesson objective. Occasionally, next steps are used. These inconsistencies can be eradicated by sharing best practise in the school.
- Achievement and effort are celebrated immediately leading to outstanding levels of motivation from pupils.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- Leaders and governors are outstanding in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for Religious Education.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect in each key stage.
- Leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education has full parity with other core curriculum subjects including professional development, resourcing, staffing and accommodation. The subject leader regularly attends Archdiocesan in-service training and meets together with other schools to support monitoring and evaluation of the subject.
- Since the last inspection the *Come and See* programme has been fully implemented across the school and all relevant documentation e.g. planning, monitoring and tracking are fully embedded.
- Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation of Religious Education is a coherent reflection of rigorous assessment, tracking, monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge which is informed by best practice in Religious Education.
- Whole school tracking is in place however analysis of it is not yet rigorous enough and some data at the higher levels is inaccurate. This will improve when staff are more confident using the language of the level descriptors more succinctly on a daily basis.
- The subject leader is a real strength in the school. She has an inspiring vision of outstanding teaching and learning and a high level of expertise in securing this vision. She is enthusiastic and committed to the role. Since the monitoring visit she has continued to drive forward the subject and is endeavouring to improve teaching and learning in Religious Education further. One member of staff commented that, *"The RE lead is a fabulous example of enthusiasm and dedication and really encompasses Catholic Life as it should be. Amazing!"*
- Leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education is planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. There is a link governor for Religious Education who supports the subject leader in her role.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship

- Pupils response to and participation in the school's Collective Worship is outstanding.
- Pupils act with reverence and are keen to participate in Collective Worship.

- They sing joyfully, reflect in silence and join in community prayer appropriately and with confidence.
- Pupils are involved in planning, preparing and leading worship with confidence, enthusiasm and a degree of independence.
- In some classes, pupils are routinely evaluating Collective Worship, either as a leader or a participant, but this needs to be further developed across the school.
- Pupils use a variety of approaches to prayer which includes scripture, religious artefacts, liturgical music and other forms of prayer.
- Pupils value and participate voluntarily in liturgy and prayer and say that they really enjoy taking part in it.
- Pupils have an outstanding understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons and feasts and the approaches this requires in the planning of appropriate worship opportunities.
- The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils, irrespective of ability or faith background. They have a well-developed sense of respect for those of other faiths.
- Pupils experience Collective Worship in the prayer garden when the weather permits.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good.
- Collective Worship is part of the life of the school and prayer is included in all school celebrations. Praying together is part of the daily experience for pupils and staff.
- Staff regularly use 'Come and See for Yourself' Collective Worship materials prior to beginning a new Religious Education topic.
- Collective Worship and resourcing is given a high priority in the school. Portfolios of evidence are collated by every member of staff for monitoring purposes and the school website has video extracts of pupils undertaking Collective Worship.
- Staff need to become more skilled in helping pupils to plan and deliver quality worship. The school would benefit from undertaking Archdiocesan in-service training to support Collective Worship.
- Collective Worship has a purpose, message and direction although evidence suggests this is not always clear and at times a mini lesson is created rather than a reflective, prayerful experience.
- Scripture must always be chosen by the teacher and they need to facilitate the worship alongside the pupils.
- Relevant staff have a very good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts and ensure that pupils have good experiences of the Church's liturgical life.
- The themes chosen for worship reflect a good understanding of the liturgical seasons and the Catholic character of the school.
- Opportunities are planned in a manner that facilitates attendance by other adults associated with the pupils and school and response to this invitation is very good.
- The parish priest is a frequent visitor to the school and is fulsome in his praise of St. Francis'. He presides at Mass for key celebrations throughout the Church's liturgical year and supports in class during some Religious Education topics.

How well leaders, governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship

- Leaders and governors are good in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for Collective Worship.

- Leaders know how to provide policies and guidelines to plan and deliver quality Collective Worship. There is a policy in place but this needs updating in light of the recent review of the Mission Statement.
- Leaders have a very good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts. They make these accessible to the pupils in a contemporary context.
- Leaders of Collective Worship within the school are appropriate models of good practice for staff and pupils. However, it is highly recommended that the school undertakes Archdiocesan in-service training to support staff planning Collective Worship.
- Staff promote pupils' planning and leading Collective Worship but this needs to be further developed in the school to ensure quality experiences are delivered.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Further develop the work being undertaken in Catholic Life by:
 - undertaking Archdiocesan in-service training for Collective Worship;
 - beginning to develop a curriculum map for Relationships and Sex Education;
 - continuing to embed '*Journey in Love*' into lessons to support Relationships and Sex Education.
- Raise the standards of attainment in Religious Education further by:
 - continuing to address the areas identified on the Self Evaluation Document.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	1
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CATHOLIC LIFE

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school	1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	1
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education	1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship	2

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is Outstanding, Grade 2 Outstanding, Grade 3 Requires Improvement and Grade 4 Inadequate