

Diocese of Hallam

INSPECTION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
(Section 23 of the School Inspections Act)

St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Bungalow Road
Edlington
Doncaster
DN12 1DL

Inspection Date: 17th and 18th May, 2004
Diocesan Inspector: Mrs Gillian Foster

This inspection of the denominational character of St Mary's Catholic Primary School was carried out under the direction of the Governors of the school in fulfilment of their obligations under the requirements of Canon Law (ref,804, 806), Section 23 of the 1996 School Inspections Act, Section 13 of the Education (Schools) Act of 1992 and Sections 241 and 259 Of the Education Act 1993. This Inspection was conducted according to the Guidelines For Section 23 Inspections in Catholic Schools issued by the National Board Of Religious Inspectors and Advisors Working Party in January 2004.

The process of Inspection in the Diocese of Hallam has been developed to support and encourage each school and parish community. It is hoped that this report will celebrate all that is positive and praiseworthy in St Mary's Catholic Primary School and help to promote sound development for the future.



A copy of this report may be obtained from the Governors of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bungalow Road, Edlington, Doncaster DN12 1DL or from the Diocese of Hallam Schools' Department, The Hallam Pastoral Centre, St Charles Street, Sheffield S9 3WU.

INTRODUCTION

Basic information about the school

NAME OF SCHOOL	St Mary's Catholic Primary
TYPE	Primary
STATUS	Voluntary Aided
NUMBER ON ROLL	202 (including 27 part time Nursery pupils)
AGE RANGE	3 – 11
GENDER OF PUPILS	Mixed
CHAIRMAN OF GOVERNORS	Rev P O'Connor
HEADTEACHER	Mrs Isobel Dugher
ADDRESS OF SCHOOL	Bungalow Road, Edlington, Doncaster. DN12 1DL
TELEPHONE NUMBER	01709 863280
DATE OF INSPECTION	17th and 18th May, 2004
DIOCESAN INSPECTOR	Gillian Foster

The 202 pupils on roll organised into classes as follows:

Nursery	27 (mornings only)
Reception	24
Year 1	22
Year 2	30
Year 3	30
Year 4	18
Year 5	25
Year 6	26

The Planned Admission Number is 30 and the average class size is 25

1.1 Key characteristics of the school

1.1a St Mary's Catholic Primary School was opened in 1962 and serves the parish of St Mary's, Edlington. The children generally come from homes slightly below the national average socio-economic index. Currently, 25% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The general level of attainment of children on entry to school is well below that expected nationally. There are 8 (4.6%) pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, with 4 for whom English is not their first language. A little over 20% of pupils have special educational needs; 3 of these pupils have formal statements of special educational need.

- 1.1b Of the 202 pupils currently on roll, 125 are baptised Catholics (62%), most of these pupils belong to St Mary's parish with a few pupils coming from Sacred Heart parish, Balby. 22 (11%) pupils belong to the Church of England, 8 (4%) children are Methodists and 3 (1.5%) belong to other Christian Churches. The remaining 44 (22%) pupils are unaffiliated or prefer not to disclose their faith backgrounds.
- 1.1c Of the 7 full time teachers, (including the headteacher), and the 1 part-time teacher, 6 are Catholic (75%).
- 1.1d Attainment at the end of Key Stage One and Key Stage Two is broadly in line with national expectations for similar schools and shows a rising trend.
- 1.1e The current School Improvement Plan includes targets relating directly to Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school. The priorities are:- to revise the policy on Spirituality and make Spirituality the essence of all work in school; link the PSHE curriculum into Religious Education planning; the continued development of assessment in Religious Education; ensuring good coverage and continuity in the teaching of Other Faiths; monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and the audit of planning and resources. The high priority placed on the development of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school underlines the importance that the school places on both the development and maintenance of high standards in Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school community.

1.2 The overall quality of the school's Catholic life and its provision for Religious Education

- 1.2a St Mary's Catholic Primary school is a very good Catholic school where the ideals of the Mission Statement are lived out on a daily basis and where a happy, caring, Catholic environment is created and underpinned by Gospel values.
- 1.2b Very good, supportive and affirming relationships exist throughout the school. This leads to a warm and caring environment where children feel happy, safe, secure and valued.
- 1.2c There is a very strong culture of respect in the school; adults show respect to other adults and children and the children likewise, show respect to adults and each other.
- 1.2d The school is very well led by the headteacher who has a clear vision for the school based on her own strong faith and her knowledge of and commitment to the community. She is motivated by her desire to provide the pupils with the best possible environment to allow each one of them to fulfil their unique potential and to support the parents in their task of educating their children. The

- headteacher is very well supported by an able and dedicated deputy headteacher and staff who work together as an effective team.
- 1.2e The governors of the school provide very strong and effective governance. They have a clear understanding of the explicit nature of Catholic education and have a sound knowledge and understanding of the strengths and areas of development for the school. The Chair of Governors, who is also the parish priest, contributes very strong leadership based on his many years in the role, his intimate knowledge of the school, the children and their families gained from his daily visits to school. All governors are committed to maintaining the Catholic ethos of the school; they contribute to shaping the vision and direction of the school and act as effective ‘critical friends’.
- 1.2f The School Improvement Plan contains targets and objectives both for the development of Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school. Staff and governors now need to ensure that targets identified in the school’s Self Evaluation Form and any issues raised in this report are also included in the Plan.
- 1.2g Very good links exist between the school and the parish community. To further strengthen these links, the school and parish community now needs to consider a recommendation made by the Diocesan Review Team in Autumn 2003, to establish and maintain links with the newly baptised and their families.
- 1.2h Sacramental Preparation is carried out by parish catechists in the Church hall outside school hours. The whole school celebrates with the children when they have made their First Holy Communion. This is very good practice.
- 1.2i The partnership between school and parents is very strong. The school readily supports parents in the upbringing of their children by providing workshops and other curriculum related support, by encouraging them to come into school as voluntary helpers and by providing pastoral support when appropriate for children and liaising closely with parents. This partnership is a strength of the school.
- 1.2j The school makes very good provision for children with special educational needs and these pupils are fully integrated into the life of the school.
- 1.2k The school is very inclusive, and where numbers allow, welcomes children into school who have had difficulties in other schools.
- 1.2l Behaviour is very good. Clear and understood rules, rewards and sanctions contribute to this and lead to a good, calm climate for learning. The children’s attitude to learning is very good.
- 1.2m Teaching in Religious Education ranges from satisfactory to excellent. All teachers plan Religious Education lessons thoroughly and in accordance with

- the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Very good use is made of non-teaching staff and they make a significant contribution to children achieving their learning objectives. Most teachers include differentiated activities in their planning although there is often too great a reliance on differentiation by outcome. This issue now needs to be addressed.
- 1.2n Children make satisfactory to good progress and sometimes very good progress in Religious Education.
- 1.2o Standards in Religious Education are generally commensurate with attainment in other curriculum areas. Procedures for assessment are in place but are not at present used consistently throughout the school. This has been highlighted as an area for development in the School Improvement Plan and now needs to be addressed.
- 1.2p The quantity and quality of written work is inconsistent and does not always reflect complete coverage of the 'Here I Am' programme, although in discussions with the children, it is obvious that they have covered all the work. Staff have already highlighted this problem and have re-arranged the timetable to allow for longer Religious Education sessions, particularly in Key Stage Two, to allow for the possibility of more extended writing. This is a good strategy. Staff now need to come to an agreement about the quantity of recorded work expected from each age group.
- 1.2q Children are encouraged to work independently and take responsibility for themselves and others. The School Council is very effective in offering pupils such opportunities.
- 1.2r The Religious Education Co-ordinator, who is also the deputy headteacher, took up her post in September 2003. In the relatively short time she has been in post, she has conducted an audit of current practice in Religious Education and has produced an Action Plan to address the issues. This Action Plan is realistic and has already had an impact on moving Religious Education forward. The first phase of the Action Plan included monitoring teaching and learning in Religious Education; this has already been carried out. The role of the co-ordinator now needs to be extended to include the regular monitoring of teaching and learning, planning and work-sampling in order to give her an overview of the strengths and weaknesses in the Religious Education curriculum, consistency of practice and the opportunity to share some of the very good practice which already takes place in school.
- 1.2s Collective Worship and assemblies are of a very high standard and offer pupils a variety of rich experiences of belonging to a worshipping, Eucharistic community.

- 1.2t The spiritual and moral development of the children are very good and this is a strength of the school.
- 1.2u Display in all classrooms is of a very high standard and always features children's work on either the current 'Here I Am' topic or the Church's Liturgical season. Staff and governors may like to consider creating a Religious Education display in a prominent place in the hall using some of the children's work, to underline the explicit Catholic nature of the education offered to the children of St Mary's school.
- 1.2v Resources are adequate to deliver the Religious Education curriculum and under regular review.

1.3 How the school's effectiveness has improved or changed since its previous inspection

All the Key Issues (KI) for further development identified in the report of 1999 have been addressed.

- KI 1 The school has celebrated and consolidated all the good practice identified in the previous report.
- KI 2 An assessment policy has been developed and procedures for assessment put in place. These assessment procedures are not currently being consistently used throughout the school and this issue needs re-visiting to ensure consistency of good practice.
- KI 3 Display of Religious Education work and themes is now of a good standard in all classrooms. Staff and Governors should now consider creating a display of Religious Education work and themes in a prominent place in the hall to reinforce the high priority the school gives to Religious Education.
- KI 4 Recent extensions and re-modelling of the school buildings have greatly enhanced the provision for quiet learning areas and a library and have provided discrete access to all classrooms.
- KI 5 The quality of reports to parents is now of a high standard and provides clear information on children's progress and attainment in knowledge and understanding in Religious Education.

1.4 How the school is viewed by its pupils and parents

- 1.4a From informal discussions with children of all ages and from reading reports of the School Council, it is obvious that children enjoy coming to school and feel safe, valued and secure. They all express the view that they are treated fairly

and that they can turn to members of staff for help if they have any problems or difficulties. They appreciate the fact that their views are sought and listened to through the School Council and that some of their ideas have been implemented. They all comment on how they enjoy most of the work they do in class and they particularly enjoy taking part in assemblies, out of school activities and going on school trips. The children are very proud of their school and believe it to be the best school in Doncaster.

- 1.4b Nine parents attended the pre-inspection parents' meeting, twenty six parents returned the questionnaires and many parents chatted to the inspector during the inspection. The parents overwhelmingly support the strong Catholic ethos of the school; they are pleased with the good standards their children achieve in Religious Education and the very good spiritual and moral development of their children. They appreciate the very good pastoral care their children receive, especially through the 'Care Slot'. Parents are appreciative of the partnership the school fosters with them, the approachability of the headteacher and staff and the many opportunities the school provides for them in running family learning workshops. Parents value the many invitations they receive to attend Masses and celebrations although a significant minority of parents would appreciate invitations to class assemblies.

1.5 The accuracy of the school's self-evaluation

The school has completed the Diocesan Self Evaluation Form. This provides a good tool for development by highlighting relevant areas needing action or development. The assessment is realistic and rigorous but now needs to be revisited to include issues identified in this report. These issues need to generate targets and objectives, together with success criteria, which should then be included in the School Improvement Plan.

2.1 Areas for further development

The governors and staff of St Mary's School should now address and include in its Post Inspection Action Plan the following:

- 2.1a Celebrate and consolidate the very good spiritual and moral development of the children, the very good and effective partnership with the parents and the strong links with the parish.
- 2.1b Implement the recommendation made by the Diocesan Review Team in October 2003, to significantly strengthen support given to 'post baptism' families by developing and maintaining links with the newly baptised and their families.
- 2.1c Build on the good procedures already in place for assessment by ensuring consistency of practice throughout the school.

- 2.1d Agree the amount of written work to be expected from each age group.
- 2.1e Continue to develop the role of the Religious Education Co-ordinator to include more regular monitoring of teaching and learning, planning and work scrutiny.
- 2.2 The following matters should also be considered as areas for development by the school:**
- 2.2a Consider inviting parents to class assemblies, when appropriate. (1.4b, 9.2d)
- 2.2b Include more differentiated activities into planning for Religious Education lessons to lessen reliance on differentiation by outcome. (4.1d)
- 2.2c Include a policy for moral development in the new PSHE Policy. (10.2a)
- 2.2d Consider creating a display of Religious Education work and themes in a prominent position in the hall. (KI 3-p7, 6.1d)
- 3. The Quality of Religious Education**
- 3.1 Standards and achievement in Religious Education**
- 3.1a The progress made by pupils in Religious Education ranges from satisfactory to very good and is in line with progress made in other curriculum areas.
- 3.1b Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. The needs of these pupils are very accurately assessed and teachers plan activities that are appropriate to their needs and matched to their abilities. Tasks are presented in interesting and varied ways. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by non teaching staff. Teachers share planning and learning objectives with non-teaching colleagues and this, together with their enthusiasm and commitment, contributes to pupils achieving the learning objectives. Pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties are very well catered for and very well integrated into the life of the school both in and out of the classroom.
- 3.1c The progress made by boys and girls is broadly equal.
- 3.1d All teachers' planning includes learning objectives appropriate to the 'Here I Am' Religious Education programme and in line with the 'Levels of Attainment in Religious Education' level descriptors recommended by the Diocese. Most children make satisfactory or good progress in achieving these targets; some make very good progress.

- 3.1e The school places great emphasis on teaching the beliefs and values of the Catholic Faith to all the children in ways appropriate to their age. Teachers achieve this through the delivery of the 'Here I Am' programme and through the example of the daily life of the school and the Gospel values which underpin all the school strives to achieve. The strength of relationships throughout the school and the culture of respect and dignity offered to all, is for the children, a shining example of Christian values. Children benefit greatly from their almost daily meetings with the parish priest and the many Masses, liturgies and celebrations they share with their families and parishioners both in Church and in school. By these worshipful celebrations, the children come to understand and appreciate that they are a part of a worshipping, Eucharistic community. Evidence of previous work and discussions with children indicate that they have a good knowledge and understanding of other world faiths. The multi-faith and multi-cultural elements of the 'Here I Am' programme are well taught.
- 3.1f Pupils are generally able to communicate their understanding of religious concepts well. The school has recently focused on developing Speaking and Listening skills and the success of this is evident in the children's responses. Most teachers demonstrate good questioning skills and give children the opportunity and time to first reflect upon the question and then give a response.
- 3.1g In most classes, teachers are skilful at asking questions which help children to search for meaning and purpose. By the time children are in the older classes, they are able to explore questions and issues and express mature answers based on their knowledge and understanding of the Church's teaching.

4 Teaching in Religious Education

4.1 The quality of teaching in Religious Education in relation to its impact on pupils' learning

- 4.1a The quality of teaching in Religious Education ranges from satisfactory to excellent.
- 4.1b All teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Catholic Faith, of Religious Education and the 'Here I Am' programme. All teachers attend topic days at the Hallam Pastoral Centre to help them to understand and explore the topics. Staff meetings are regularly dedicated to Religious Education issues and the Religious Education Co-ordinator has re-introduced the 'Before You Begin' element of the 'Here I Am' programme at the start of each new topic. This is very good practice and helps to support Catholic and other colleagues. Staff also benefit greatly from the regular visits made to school by the parish priest. All these initiatives contribute to the on-going formation of the staff.

- 4.1c Most teachers demonstrate good questioning skills in discussion sessions which challenge pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Teachers provide frequent, good opportunities for children to work both independently and co-operatively and always make clear their high expectations of work and behaviour. The inspector witnessed one lesson in Year Six where pupils were discussing an issue in pairs; the teacher gave prompts which guided the children not only to explore the issue in depth, but to relate to their partners in such a way that the opinion of each was drawn out and respected however different from their own point of view. This was an example of excellent teaching making a positive impact on the children's learning both from the curriculum point of view and the children's social development and awareness.
- 4.1d All teachers' planning is thorough and ensures coverage of the Religious Education curriculum. Teachers share learning objectives with the children at the start of the lesson so that they are clear about expectations of what they are going to learn. Teachers build on work done previously to extend and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. In almost all cases, teachers re-visit the objectives at the end of the lesson to assess the level of understanding the children have achieved. Some teachers regularly include differentiated tasks in their planning to ensure that tasks are well matched to the ability of the pupils; other teachers rely in general on differentiation by outcome. This is often appropriate, but consideration needs to be given to including more differentiated tasks into planning.
- 4.1e Teachers use a variety of methods appropriate to the age, ability and needs of the children in helping them to achieve the learning objectives. Drama was used very effectively in a Year Two class to help the children to appreciate how the Disciples felt when Jesus left them. All children in the class deepened their understanding through this re-enactment and showed real empathy with the Disciples.
- 4.1f The behaviour of the children is very good. Teachers demonstrate very good classroom management skills and the very good knowledge they have of each individual pupil, allows them to present interesting tasks to ensure the motivation and co-operation of all the children. Most teachers conduct lessons at a lively pace and encourage creative and independent work.
- 4.1g All classes allocate ten percent of teaching time to Religious Education as required by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- 4.1g Teachers sometimes use a Religious Education topic as the focus for a Literacy session. This cross-curricular planning is good practice and allows opportunity for extended writing in Religious Education.

- 4.1h Parents value the information they receive from school on what their children are learning in Religious Education and the suggestions for supporting their children's learning. This partnership supports and strengthens the children's learning opportunities and supports the parents in their own knowledge and understanding of Religious Education taught to their children in school. This is good practice.
- 4.1i As previously stated, non-teaching members of staff make a valuable contribution to the attainment of the pupils. They form very good relationships with the children, and in addition to supporting them in the curriculum, they contribute to developing self-esteem and self-worth in the children. They themselves are valued by teaching staff and parents; where appropriate, they are given every encouragement and opportunity to undergo additional training and advance their careers. Two non-teaching members of staff are currently training to be specialist teaching assistants, and a member of staff who previously worked as a nursery nurse in the school, has recently been appointed as a class teacher after being encouraged and supported by the school to train as a teacher.
- 4.1j The school places a high priority on on-going staff formation. All staff receive regular in-service training in Religious Education. The regular visits to school by the parish priest is of great personal benefit to the staff. Each year, the school dedicates an in-service day to spirituality. The effect is that all staff are well informed, confident and enthusiastic in teaching Religious Education.

4.2 How well pupils learn in Religious Education

- 4.2a In all lessons, teachers share learning objectives with the children at the start of each lesson so that children are quite clear about what they are going to learn.
- 4.2b All lessons are planned to ensure that children either acquire new knowledge and understanding or consolidate and develop existing knowledge and understanding. These objectives are almost always met.
- 4.2c In all lessons observed, teachers build upon prior knowledge of pupils by skilful and relevant questioning. The children show good recall of work previously done and are willing and eager to share this knowledge with staff and classmates.
- 4.2d Pupils apply themselves well to the task in hand. Teachers generally allow for and encourage creativity and independence. This is good practice. The quality of presentation of written work ranges from satisfactory to very good in some cases and is commensurate with written work in other curriculum areas. The school currently has a focus on improving writing throughout the school; this follows a period of focusing on the development of Speaking and Listening skills. Where teacher expectations are high and made clear, the presentation by the children is good or very good. Marking by most teachers is effective, it is used to affirm

- good work and suggest ways in which the child can improve. This is good practice.
- 4.2e Most of the children are enthusiastic about Religious Education lessons, they are generally eager to engage with tasks and complete activities. This is especially so where teachers set high standards of expectations and help children to a good pace of work by encouraging remarks, reminders of time constraints and modelling good examples of other pupil's work. The quantity of written work recorded in books at Key Stage Two does not reflect coverage of the 'Here I Am' topics although from discussions with the children it is obvious that they have covered and understood the work. The Religious Education Co-ordinator recently identified this as an issue and as a consequence the Key Stage Two timetable has been re-organised to allow for longer Religious Education lessons and thus increase the time available for extended writing. This is a good strategy. Staff now need to come to an agreement about the amount of written work expected from each age group.
- 4.2f Almost all the children show interest and enjoyment in Religious Education lessons and assemblies and are able to sustain good levels of concentration. In the best lessons, there is good pace and a variety of activities and teaching strategies which inspire and motivate children to concentration and enthusiasm.
- 4.2g Children are given many opportunities to work collaboratively together. They are encouraged to show respect for each other by listening to the views of others and taking their turn to offer their own views. They are actively coached in effective listening skills. The regular use of Circle Time presents excellent opportunities for this development.

4.3 The quality of assessment of pupils' work in Religious Education

- 4.3a A Key Issue in the last inspection was to 'Develop the good aims of the assessment policy, with agreed procedures which are simple and effective'. Such procedures have been put in place whereby the 'tick sheets' provided by the Diocese are regularly used and the level descriptors are used in assessment and report writing. The Self Evaluation Form identifies as a priority, to ensure consistency of practice in assessment throughout the school. There are also plans to re-introduce Religious Education assessment books for each pupil, where one piece of work per term will be assessed against AT1 or AT2. This, together with the continued development of portfolios of moderated work, now needs to be implemented throughout the school.
- 4.3b All teachers mark written work and most of the marking is effective. It serves to affirm and celebrate what the children have done well and suggest ways in which the children could improve. Some of the comments written by teachers, lead the

children to a higher level of understanding or stimulate them to explore the issue further. This is good practice.

5. Pupils' response to Religious Education

- 5.a Pupils generally apply themselves productively and with interest to what they are doing especially when presented with interesting and challenging tasks. They usually show enjoyment of Religious Education and are able to sustain concentration in lessons. Most teachers contribute to this by maintaining a good pace, lively questioning and appropriate prompts.
- 5.b The very good relationships evident throughout the school are founded on Gospel values; central to this philosophy is the belief in the uniqueness and dignity of each member of the community as a child of God. The children are treated at all times with dignity and respect and this very good example helps them to understand and share the Christian values promoted by the school.
- 5.c All the adults in school work hard at helping the children to develop self-esteem and self-worth. Children are given responsibilities appropriate to their age and capabilities in the day-to-day life of the school and are always thanked for carrying them out successfully. There is a hierarchical structure of rewards that pupils understand and appreciate.
- 5.d The behaviour of the children is very good. They have a clear understanding of what is right and wrong, a good sense of justice and an understanding of what constitutes acceptable behaviour. Where pupils' behaviour falls below the acceptable standard, staff take time to discuss the issues with the children in a respectful way and help them to understand the need to alter their behaviour. Parents are very appreciative of this approach.

6. The provision for the curriculum in Religious Education

- 6.1a The planned curriculum fulfils the requirements of the Curriculum Directory.
- 6.1b All classes allocate ten percent of teaching time to Religious Education which fulfils the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- 6.1c The school has sufficient teaching and support staff to match the demands of the Religious Education curriculum and ensure its effective delivery. Throughout the school, but mainly in Key Stage Two, children are placed in ability groups for the core curriculum subjects including Religious Education. This helps to ensure that children are receiving the curriculum at an appropriate level for each of them. Careful planning by staff ensures continuity and progression for all the children. The school has a well planned programme for staff development and formation and all staff are knowledgeable and confident in teaching Religious Education.

- 6.1d Since the completion of the recent building work in school, all classrooms provide adequate accommodation for the delivery of the curriculum and very good use is made of the newly created additional learning spaces. All classrooms feature high quality displays of pupils' work in Religious Education related to the current 'Here I Am' topic or the Church's liturgical season. All classrooms have a focal area for prayer that enhances the opportunity for spiritual development. The hall does not currently contain any Religious Education displays and staff and governors may like to consider creating such a display in a prominent place in the hall to underline the high priority the school places on Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school.
- 6.1e The school commits an annual budget to the Religious Education Co-ordinator to purchase resources. On her appointment to the role in September 2003, the Co-ordinator conducted an audit of resources and plans to develop and extend the existing resource. The school is adequately resourced to teach all elements of the 'Here I Am' programme, including the multi-faith and multi-cultural elements.
- 6.1f The school is fully inclusive and within the limits of the admission criteria, welcomes any child into school whose needs they are able to address. The school has admitted several pupils during the current academic year who have suffered real difficulties at their previous schools and were actually, or were in danger of, being excluded. Almost all of these children have settled into school very well and are making good progress. This is a result of the excellent pastoral care the school offers both children and their parents and the quality of the teaching experienced by the children.
- 6.1g The school includes and respects the faith backgrounds of pupils of other faiths. Currently the school has no pupils from other world faiths but all the children are taught to understand, respect and celebrate diversity.

7. Leadership and Management in Religious Education

7.1 The quality of leadership provided for Religious Education

- 7.1a The headteacher, together with the deputy headteacher and members of the governing body, has a very clear vision for curriculum Religious Education within the mission of the school. She is committed to the promotion and maintenance of high standards and ensuring the best provision for all pupils. The grouping of children according to ability and the regular involvement of the parents in the Religious Education of the children, is a practical demonstration of this commitment. The headteacher gives very strong, supportive leadership.
- 7.1b The Religious Education Co-ordinator took up her post in September 2003; she is

also the deputy headteacher. During her first term in school she conducted an audit of current practice and resources. Following this she drew up an Action Plan to address priorities she had identified which is currently being implemented. The Action Plan is realistic, rigorous and challenging. One of the identified priorities is to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning in Religious Education. The Co-ordinator observed one Religious Education lesson in each class and gave feedback to colleagues. This is very good practice but now needs to be extended to include regular monitoring and evaluation of planning, teaching and learning and its impact on standards attained by the children through scrutiny of pupil's work. This will enable the Co-ordinator to have a regular overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the Religious Education curriculum and enable her to share with colleagues some of the very good practice already being carried out in Religious Education. The Co-ordinator is very hard-working and enthusiastic, she supports colleagues well and appropriately to their needs. She has already had an impact on moving Religious Education forward.

7.2 The effectiveness of management in Religious Education

- 7.2a Priorities for the development of curriculum Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school are currently included in the School Improvement Plan; The senior management team and governors now need to include any areas highlighted in this report within the Plan. A budget is allocated each year for the purchase of resources and staff training/formation. This money has been effectively spent in the past resulting in an adequate supply of resources and well-trained staff. The Religious Education Co-ordinator has identified in her Action Plan future resource priorities.
- 7.2b Planning of the Religious Education curriculum by all teachers is thorough. Teachers plan effectively to ensure coverage of the curriculum and continuity and progression for all pupils.
- 7.2c The school has completed the Diocesan Self-Evaluation Form and this has provided a realistic and good tool for assessing current practice and highlighting areas for future development. This document now needs to be re-visited following this inspection, and the priorities thus identified for development, included in the School Improvement Plan.
- 7.2d As stated earlier, the Religious Education Co-ordinator has already made a valuable contribution to the maintenance and development of the already good standards in Religious Education. The extension of her monitoring role will ensure even further development.
- 7.2e Performance Management is embedded in the culture and practice of the school and is seen as a positive and affirming process, that leads to greater personal

and professional development for staff. Non-teaching staff are included in the structure and as noted earlier, through the encouragement of the headteacher, one member of staff who worked in the school as a Nursery Nurse is now a class teacher and two classroom assistants are currently training to gain specialist teacher assistant status.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

8.1 How well the governing body fulfils its role in relation to the school's religious foundation

8.1a The governors have a very clear understanding of the explicit nature of Catholic Education. They are very well led by the Chairman who is also the parish priest. He has held the position for many years and has a detailed knowledge of the children, their families and the community from which they come. He is totally committed to the well-being of the school and demonstrates this by his daily visits to school and his involvement with many school activities, both liturgical and social. All the governors are totally committed to maintaining the very strong Catholic ethos of the school. They contribute to shaping the vision and direction of the Catholic life of the school.

8.1b Governors are very proactive and play a valuable role in the life of the school. They take their responsibilities very seriously and meet regularly in committees or as a full body. They undertake relevant training and are kept well informed of school issues by the headteacher and the LEA to enable them to be effective in monitoring and evaluating the performance of the school.

8.1c The governing body are very well informed about school issues and act as an effective 'critical friend' in supporting and challenging the headteacher and senior management team at appropriate times. The governors are well aware of their specific roles and responsibilities and those of the headteacher and senior management team.

8.2 The quality of leadership of the headteacher and senior staff in leading the Catholic life of the school.

8.2a The headteacher has a very clear vision for the direction of the Catholic life of the school. This comes from her own deep faith and her intimate knowledge and understanding of the needs and difficulties of the community from which the children and their families come. Her vision of a community where Gospel Values lie at its heart is translated into practical acts and management. Each child is respected as a unique gift from God deserving of the very best opportunities to enable them to reach their full potential. The headteacher acknowledges that the parents are the primary educators and by promoting a very strong partnership with them, gives them very effective support. She is very well supported by the deputy

- headteacher and staff who all share the ideals of this vision.
- 8.2b Strategic planning reflects and promotes the school's mission. The school, under the effective leadership of the headteacher, works hard to find new ways of furthering the school's mission; this is evidenced by the inclusion in the School Improvement Plan of priorities relating to the Catholic life of the school.
 - 8.2c The Mission statement informs and directs all school documentation and policies. The Gospel Values explicit in the Mission Statement are lived out in the day-to-day life of the school.
 - 8.2d There is a very clear commitment to evangelisation and catechesis, that extends beyond the children to their families. Parents and parishioners are invited to Masses and liturgies and they express appreciation of these invitations.
 - 8.2e The headteacher places a very high priority on standards attained in Religious Education and promotes the same high expectations as in other curriculum areas.
 - 8.2f The headteacher provides very strong, clear leadership. She affirms and supports staff and she is held in very high regard by them, the parents, pupils and governors.
 - 8.2g The headteacher and deputy headteacher have formed a very good working relationship in the short time the deputy has been in post. They have the confidence of the staff and they support and motivate them. They are totally committed to running an equitable and inclusive school in which each pupil matters. Each child and adult in school is treated with great respect and dignity and is valued as a unique gift from God. Within the constraints of the Admission Policy, the school welcomes pupils who may have had difficulties in previous schools. Several such pupils have been admitted to the school during the current academic year and almost all are happily settled and integrated into school life and are making good progress.
 - 8.2h The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very good role models for the staff and pupils. Parents expressed their appreciation of this.

9 The quality of Collective Worship

9.1 The frequency and quality of prayer and Collective Worship

- 9.1a Collective Worship fulfils statutory and diocesan requirements. Acts of Collective Worship are held each day either in whole school assemblies, Key Stage assemblies, in class or Church.

- 9.1b There is an excellent policy for Collective Worship which is reviewed every two years by staff and governors. The policy includes a clear rationale, specific and wide ranging policy aims and guidelines to support the implementation of the policy. From evidence gathered by the inspector, the aims of the policy are being fulfilled.
- 9.1c Worship plays a central role in the life of the school and assemblies, liturgies and Masses are very carefully planned to reflect the Church's liturgical year and usually the current 'Here I Am' topic. Great attention is paid to the appropriateness of Collective Worship for the ages of the children.
- 9.1d During the inspection, the inspector witnessed two assemblies, one Foundation Stage assembly and one Key Stage One assembly. Both assemblies were celebrations of the work completed in the 'Here I Am' topic, 'Holidays'. The children in Foundation Stage held their assembly in Church and behaved in a reverent and respectful way whilst at the same time singing and praying enthusiastically. A focal point of a lit candle, pictures and a Bible was created on the altar steps and many of the children talked about their holidays and displayed work; they listened to each other well. The children were asked to reflect quietly on the wonderful things they had seen and heard about and then say a 'thank you' prayer and sing a hymn. The assembly was short, interesting and meaningful, and wholly appropriate to the ages of the children. The children were obviously used to being part of a worshipping community and enjoyed the experience. The Key Stage One assembly was held in the school hall. Again, a beautiful focal point was built up by the teacher leading the assembly. Many children from each class presented and talked about work they had done. A reading from the Gospel was included and several children read out prayers they had written themselves. At every opportunity, teachers directed the children to an appreciation of the awe and wonder of God's world.
- 9.1f The inspector also witnessed several reflective sessions at the end of Religious Education lessons where pupils were given the opportunity to reflect upon what they had learnt and relate this to their own lives. In all such sessions there was a strong emphasis on giving praise and thanks to God through formal and informal prayers.
- 9.1g Prayer plays a very important part in the life of the school. Each classroom has a copy of the St Mary's Prayer Book which contains a selection of prayers which the children learn and say at appropriate times. Children are encouraged to say and write their own prayers and this they do with confidence. Prayers are always said with reverence by the children.

9.2 The provision and quality of the liturgical life of the school

- 9.2a The school recognises the Eucharist to be central to the school's liturgical life. Great care is taken to ensure that the children are introduced to the Eucharist in a step by step approach. At the Foundation Stage and Key Stage One, the liturgies are short with ritual and variety and sometimes reflect the introductory rites in the Mass or the Liturgy of the Word. Pupils in Year Two occasionally prepare and celebrate Mass. At Key Stage Two, each class has an opportunity to prepare and celebrate Mass once every half-term. On Holy days and days special to the school, the whole school join with their families and parishioners to share the Mass. This is very good practice and most valuable in helping the children to develop an understanding and appreciation that school is an active part of a worshipping, Eucharistic community and an integral part of the parish.
- 9.2b Sacramental Preparation is carried out by parish catechists in the Church hall out of school time. Parents are invited to meetings and feel very much part of their children's' sacramental preparation. This is very good practice.
- 9.2c The school plans its liturgical celebrations at the start of each year and parents and parishioners are given advance notice and invited to attend these events. Parents are most appreciative of these invitations and attend in large numbers. A significant minority of parents would appreciate invitations to attend class assemblies and staff and governors should now give consideration to this.
- 9.2d Children respond well to liturgical celebrations. They respond and sing with enthusiasm and they say formal prayers and responses confidently and respectfully. Children are very keen to participate in such celebrations and speak of how they enjoy them.

10 The spiritual and moral development of the pupils

10.1 Spiritual development

- 10.1a The spiritual development of the children is very good. Through planned activities in the 'Here I Am' programme and in all areas of the broad and varied curriculum offered, teachers seek to identify opportunities for spiritual development. These opportunities are greatly enhanced by the many out of school activities available to the children which range from many sporting and musical activities to a gardening club run by the headteacher.
- 10.1b The thorough planning and delivery of the 'Here I Am' programme allows the children many opportunities to reflect on their own experiences, attitudes and values in the light of the Gospel values so well promoted and demonstrated by the school. The inspector witnessed several incidents of this, one in a Year Two class when the children were reflecting on how the Disciples must have felt when

- Jesus left them and one in the Year Six class where pupils were discussing in pairs the attributes needed to make a good friend in the light of a Scriptural reading they all shared earlier in the lesson. In both cases the children demonstrated skills of empathy, self-awareness, analysis and evaluation.
- 10.c During their time in school the children develop an awareness of how religious beliefs impact on people's lives and behaviour. They develop the ability to explain people's actions and motives based upon religious beliefs. This is achieved through following the multi-faith and multi-cultural element of the 'Here I Am' programme and by listening to visitors who come to school and talk about their own, different beliefs.
 - 10.d There is a very strong culture of respect in school which recognises and affirms individuality and achievement in a wide variety of areas. This promotes the development of self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others.
 - 10.e As stated earlier in this report, prayer is a very important part of school life. Children learn prayers appropriate to their ages and are encouraged to write and say their own prayers. The example of the teachers in praying with the children, gives them confidence to do the same. Each class has a 'Circle Time' each week and this is often used as an opportunity for reflective prayer. This is good practice.
 - 10.f The children are helped to understand through their Religious Education lessons and the day-to-day life of the school that inward experiences and a knowledge of God can transcend the material world.
 - 10.g All children, from the youngest age, are helped to understand and appreciate their own feelings and emotions and how these impact on others. This was apparent in most of the lessons observed when time was given to the children at the end of the lesson to reflect upon what they had learnt and relate this to their own lives.
 - 10.h The strong Catholic ethos of the school makes explicit that each individual is a unique gift from God, loved and valued by Him. This creates an awareness of God's love and presence throughout the school community.

10.2 Moral development

- 10.2a The moral development of the children is very good. The school does not currently have a specific policy for moral development although many of the elements of such a policy are contained in the Discipline Policy. The Religious Education Co-ordinator has identified as a priority the need to raise the profile of PHSE and incorporate this into Religious Education planning. It is intended that

this Policy will include a discrete section on moral development. This now needs to be implemented.

- 10.2b The Discipline Policy makes very clear the high expectations of behaviour and that every one is responsible for their own actions. The children generally live up to these high expectations and behaviour is very good. The older children have a real sense that they set the example for the younger children to follow and that this example must be good. Children of all ages are given responsibilities which they appreciate, help the smooth running of the school. The children take these responsibilities very seriously and are appreciative of the many acknowledgements and rewards they receive for them ranging from words of thanks and stickers, to public acknowledgements in school assemblies.
- 10.2c There is a very well established School Council; children from each Key Stage Two class send their own elected representatives and older children represent Foundation Stage and Key Stage One. The Council meets fortnightly, they make their own notes and report back to their classes. They have generated ideas for projects that the school has implemented. The children are very appreciative of having the opportunity to have their views heard and some of their ideas acted upon. This training in responsible citizenship is very good practice.
- 10 2d The school has encouraged and facilitated the Years Three and Four to be part of the Edlington Community Organisation 'Planning for Real' consultation process. The children helped with planting trees on a slag heap and with canal clearance in Sheffield. This opportunity to be involved in activities to improve their neighbourhood by direct action, is an excellent way of developing moral values promoted by the school.
- 10.2e The children are encouraged to and give very generously to many charities including, The Good Shepherd Collection, Mission Together, CAFOD and other charities which have particular links with the school and national appeals. This charitable giving helps the children to understand and engage with the wider world beyond their own community.

CONCLUSION

The inspector wishes to place on record her personal thanks and appreciation for the kind co-operation received from the headteacher, staff, governors, parish priest, parents and children of St Mary's School.

APPENDIX: EVIDENCE BASE

- The programme of inspection included attendance at a pre-inspection Parent's Meeting shared with OFSTED, one pre-inspection visit to the school and two full days inspection.

- Religious Education lessons were observed in each class.
- The inspector attended a Foundation Stage and a Key Stage One assembly, one of which took place in St Mary's Church.
- Interviews were held with the headteacher, the Chairman of Governors who is also the parish priest, and the Religious Education Co-ordinator.
- Discussions were held with children from all classes, parents, teaching and ancillary staff, classroom assistants, lunch time staff and the caretaker.
- The headteacher and Religious Education Co-ordinator provided a very comprehensive range of documentation which included most of the items on the Diocesan list and many other policies. The inspector was also provided with samples of pupil's work in Religious Education and Literacy; examples of assessment sheets and reports to parents; photographs of celebrations; details of liturgical events and a list of resources for Religious Education.

SUMMARY REPORT

The major strengths in Religious Education, Collective Worship and the spiritual and moral development of the children.

- Standards in Religious Education attained by the children range from satisfactory to very good and are commensurate with their attainment in other curriculum areas.
- Teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent.
- Non-teaching staff make a valuable contribution in supporting children to achieve their learning objectives.
- Behaviour is very good and the children have very good attitudes to learning.
- The spiritual and moral development of the children is very good and this is a strength of the school.
- Collective Worship is of a very high standard.
- The school is very well led by a committed and dedicated headteacher who is very well supported by the staff and governors.
- Relationships throughout the school community are very good and very strong, effective links exist between school, home and the parish. This is a strength of the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection.

All Key Issues identified in the last report have been successfully addressed although the Key Issue relating to assessment needs to be re-visited to ensure consistency of good practice throughout the school.

How the parents view the Religious Education, Collective Worship and spiritual and moral development of their children.

- Parents are satisfied with the good standards their children attain in Religious Education.
- Parents are satisfied with the very good spiritual and moral development of their children and are appreciative of the good pastoral care the headteacher and staff offer to their children.
- Parents value highly the strong Catholic ethos of the school that provides their children with a caring, supportive and nurturing environment.
- Parents are very appreciative of the many invitations they receive to attend liturgical celebrations in school and in Church.
- Parents value highly the partnership the school fosters between themselves, the parish and the wider community.
- Parents are satisfied with arrangements for Sacramental Preparation.

Areas for further development

- Celebrate and consolidate the very good spiritual and moral development of the children, the very good and effective partnership with the parents and the strong links with the parish.
- Implement the recommendation made by the Diocesan Review Team in October 2003, to significantly strengthen support given to 'post baptism' families by developing and maintaining links with the newly baptised and their families.
- Build on the good procedures already in place for assessment by ensuring consistency of practice throughout the school.
- Agree the amount of written work to be expected from each age group.
- Continue to develop the role of the Religious Education Co-ordinator to include more regular monitoring of teaching and learning, planning and work scrutiny.