

Diocese of Hallam

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

**St Marie's Catholic Primary School
Fulwood Road
Sheffield
S10 3DQ**

Inspection Date: 11th & 12th October, 2004
Diocesan Inspector: Mr Trevor Horton

This inspection of the denominational character of St Marie'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 Marie'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 Maries Catholic Primary School, Fulwood Road, Sheffield, S10 3DQ 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 Marie's Catholic Primary
TYPE	Primary
STATUS	Voluntary Aided
NUMBER ON ROLL	254
AGE RANGE	4 – 11
GENDER OF PUPILS	Mixed
CHAIRMAN OF GOVERNORS	Mr Kevin Lally
HEADTEACHER	Ms Alison Pickin
ADDRESS OF SCHOOL	Fulwood Road Sheffield S10 3DQ
TELEPHONE NUMBER	0114 2301904
DATE OF INSPECTION	11 th and 12 th October
DIOCESAN INSPECTOR	Trevor Horton

The 254 pupils on roll are organised into nine classes as follows:

Reception	10 (16 more children to be admitted in January)
Year 1	26
Year 1/Year 2	28
Year 1/Year 2	29
Year 3/Year 4	32
Year 3/Year 4	32
Year 4/Year 5	33
Year 5/Year 6	32
Year 5/Year 6	32

The Planned Admission Number is 40 and the average class size is 28.

The key characteristics of the school

St Marie's Catholic Primary School was originally founded in 1853, moved in 1878, and then again moved to its present site in 1972. The school serves five parishes, St. Marie's, St. Francis, St. Vincent's, St. William's and Holy Family. In addition some children travel from other areas outside of these parishes. Sixty-seven percent of the children are baptised Catholics. They come from varied family backgrounds, a number of them being the children of parents involved in the nearby university. Approximately 30% of the children are from minority ethnic backgrounds, for a few of these English is not their first language. Forty-eight children (19%) have special educational needs; 8 of these pupils have formal statements of special educational need.

St. Marie's has 12 teachers, 8 full time and 4 part-time (including one teacher at 0.8) who job share in Reception and one of the Y3/4 classes. One of the

part-time teachers also works 1.5 days in her role as SENCO. Nine of the teachers are Catholic (75%).

Attainment is broadly in line with the national average.

The school development plan is a good document with clear indicators of success; its primary targets are aimed at Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school. The targets cover the home/school/ parish relationships, all aspects of teaching, planning, assessing and resourcing Religious Education. This underlines the high priority given to the Catholic life of St Marie's.

How well the school is doing as a Catholic school.

St Marie's has significant strengths as a Catholic school. It benefits from very good leadership and management by the headteacher who has a clear vision of where she wishes to take the school and the measures needed to attain this. A good enthusiastic RE co-ordinator, determined to take the school forward, ably supports the headteacher.

What the school does well as a Catholic school.

- The very good relationships that exist between staff, staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves are a strength of the school.
- The recent developments in assessment are good and as they become embedded in the planning and delivery of R.E. have the potential to impact on the quality of the children's learning and understanding.
- The quality of Collective worship is of a high standard. Children are given a range of experiences and are actively involved through role-play, readings, prayers and singing.
- The school has established class councils in some of the classes and from this is developing a school council, enabling the children to take responsibility for themselves and others.
- The school's self audit is a model of good practice and sets out clear targets for the school.
- The school benefits from a hard working team of governors who know the school well and are working with the headteacher to raise standards further.
- Teaching in Religious Education ranges from satisfactory to very good. Planning in all cases is at least satisfactory and in some cases very good. Some very good examples of differentiated work are evident. However there is too much reliance on differentiation by outcome and this needs to be addressed.

- The quality of oral work is very good.
- There are a number of lunch-time clubs run by staff and every day there is an after school session that runs until 6.00pm, independent of the school.
- Children prepare for the sacraments in the parishes in which they worship. When all five parishes have completed the programme, a celebration takes place involving the whole school. This is very good practice.
- The school benefits from very good teaching assistants who plan with the teachers and relate well to the children.

Collective Worship, spiritual and moral development and the very good relationships which exist between the school, parishes and parents are a strength of the school and should be celebrated and consolidated.

Areas where the school needs to develop as a Catholic school.

- Review the practice of half-termly assessment to one that matches the topic structure of “Here I Am”.
- Build on the good work on differentiation so that all teachers structure it into their lesson planning.
- Build on the good work already being carried out by the Religious Education Co-ordinator in his monitoring of learning and teaching by more rigorous monitoring of planning.

The following matters should also be considered as areas for further development by the school:

- Review as a whole staff the marking policy and ensure consistency in its application throughout the school.
- Ensure that the very good examples of planning seen are consistent throughout the school.

How has the school improved since the last inspection?

The school was last inspected 1998. Action has been taken on all six key issues but because of all the changes in headteachers (the present head is the third since that report, as well as having two acting headships) most of these actions have come about in the last two years. However they are now beginning to have impact.

- The last two years have seen staff development days on RE assessment, Collective Worship and display.
- The school has an excellent liturgy schedule detailing feasts, seasons and topics throughout the year. Collective Worship is now of a high standard, rooted in the Gospel.
- Detailed assessment procedures are now in place and when fully in place will impact on the children's Religious Education.
- A portfolio of written work, monitored and moderated is now being developed.
- Every classroom has good RE displays and a focus area for prayer.
- Much work on the building has been carried out since the last inspection. Classrooms have been enlarged where possible and new fencing and external seating has been provided. However much is still planned and some of the classrooms are small for the numbers of children in the year groups.

The accuracy of the school's self-evaluation.

The school provided the inspector with an excellent analysis of its own evaluation as a Catholic school. It is critically evaluative and detailed. In each area of school life the evidence of how school is performing is clearly set out along with what improvements are presently taking place and plans made for future improvement. This is good practice and needs to be followed on an annual basis bringing the whole staff into the process, monitoring it rigorously.

How high are the standards in Religious Education?

Standards on entry into the reception class are slightly above the national average. Differences in attainment according to gender are slight with boys performing at a slightly lower level than girls in years two and five and under achievement at higher levels for boys of years one and three. As they progress through the school pupil's achievement is at least satisfactory. With the procedures for assessment now in place, this is likely to improve.

How effective are teaching and learning in Religious Education?

Foundation Stage

Children are admitted to St. Marie's in September and January. At the time of the Inspection there were only ten children present with another sixteen to enter after Christmas. Even with numbers so small the inspector observed a very good lesson in Reception that was Gospel based, well paced, provided a

range of experiences, extended into other areas of the curriculum (ICT, art and literacy) and made good use of the teaching assistant.

The previous week one of the parish priests had visited the class and conducted a role-play baptism with the children. Photographs of this had been made into a book and these were also on the computer. The children gained much from this visit and are developing skills of empathy and reflection and attitudes of awe and wonder and self-respect through such experiences.

Key Stage 1

The inspector observed lessons in two of the classes of this key stage. The quality of the teaching was above satisfactory in both lessons. Learning objectives were shared with the children and effective plenary sessions were planned and carried out at the end of lessons. They were well paced and, where appropriate, differentiated activities were provided. The teachers showed good questioning skills ensuring all children were involved. Planning was satisfactory, however there are very good examples of planning that could be shared by staff to improve the overall quality.

The standards in Religious Education are commensurate with those in other subjects and with the implementation of the assessment procedures the focus of the work on the child should enable each pupil to improve further.

Key Stage 2

In Key Stage 2 the teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good. Where it is very good, learning objectives are shared, plenaries are conducted in a prayerful way bringing out what the children have learnt in an atmosphere of praise and thanksgiving, the lessons are well paced and have a variety of experiences for the child. The children show good understanding especially in their verbal responses. Where appropriate, differentiated work is set, however from the work scrutiny it is clear that differentiation is mostly by outcome and this needs to be addressed. There are enough good examples to show that the teachers, with collaborative planning could address this together. This would also benefit the planning in general, which ranged from satisfactory to very good.

There are a number of very good examples of children being encouraged to work independently and collaboratively. Where children are challenged, they respond to the challenge and this shows in their work, deepening their knowledge and understanding. In all lessons, where appropriate, prior learning is consolidated and applied to the next stage of the topic.

The attitude of the children to Religious Education is generally good and the children respond well to positive reinforcement and praise. The good use of the teaching assistants ensures that those children with special educational needs are always involved and contribute to discussions. The more able children sometimes surprise their teacher with the maturity of their answers.

How well do pupils respond to Religious Education?

The attitude of pupils to Religious Education is never less than satisfactory and in most lessons is good or very good. Verbal responses in lessons are almost always appropriate and sometimes quite mature for such young children.

How good are the quality and range of the curriculum and assessment in Religious Education?

The school follows the "Here I Am" programme to fulfil its provision for Religious Education. Over the academic year it meets the Bishop's Conference curricular time requirements in RE. Each term the school looks at a world faith and has its own programme to meet this. Photographic evidence of previous topics show the good quality of this work. There is evidence of progression as the children moved through the key stages.

The school has a marking policy and some good examples of marking that combine praise with constructive criticism are evident. This needs to be more consistently applied by all staff.

The school now has in place the assessment procedures as recommended by the diocese. These are still in the early stages and are not being adhered to sufficiently by all staff. The co-ordinator is aware that this needs to be a part of his monitoring role. Part of the assessment procedure is a half-termly piece of assessment work and the school should consider changing this to one that matches the topic structure.

Are the staffing, financial and material resources sufficient for the teaching of RE?

There are 10.3 full-time equivalent teachers on the staff including the headteacher. There is no one in the role of deputy head; this role is fulfilled by a management team. There are 11 teaching assistants who work extremely well with the teaching staff and make a very good contribution to the harmonious ethos that pervades the school.

With the headteacher, the RE Co-ordinator has ensured that RE has primary place in the continuous professional development programme (CDP). INSET days have covered assessment and Collective Worship. The RE co-ordinator attends the diocesan meetings and feeds back information to staff.

Religious Education receives funding on a par with other areas of the curriculum. This past year it has received additional funds to improve resources. It now is well resourced for Good News Bibles, children's Bibles, multi-faith resources, prayer focus artefacts and display materials.

Induction procedures are in place to ensure new staff quickly become familiar with school life.

In spite of difficulties with the structure of the school, all staff endeavour to ensure that the children are provided with a bright, stimulating learning environment. The governors have planned for further alterations and improvements to the building as and when finances become available.

How effective is leadership in religious education?

The Mission Statement has been in place for some time but is regularly reviewed and there have been additions and amendments. It is rooted in the Gospel and lived out in the school's life. The school places a high value on RE in driving forward the aims of the Mission Statement:

“to build a community based on Gospel values”

With the headteacher the RE co-ordinator has worked to identify the strengths and areas for development in RE and is keen to further raise its profile. From the self-evaluation the school has clearly identified targets set, these are given primary place on the school's development planning and appropriate resources are allocated. All staff share the school's commitment to the aims and values of religious education.

How effective and efficient is management in religious education?

The headteacher is an excellent role model for all staff. She has a clear vision of where she wants to lead the school, the means necessary to take it there and the organisational skills and determination to succeed in this.

Religious education in St Marie's is well led by a co-ordinator who is enthusiastic and hard working ensuring the confidence of the staff in his leadership. He is a very good role model to staff and pupils.

A programme of RE lesson observations is helping to raise standards. A portfolio of levelled work is being built up and much work has been carried out on assessment. The headteacher and RE co-ordinator recognise the need to carry out further monitoring of assessment, planning and the marking of work. With consistency across these areas, standards will further rise.

The governing body has a very clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The Chairman of the pupils and curriculum committee is very involved in the school's self evaluation processes and formulation of targets and priorities that will take religious education further forward.

WHOLE SCHOOL ASPECTS

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

The school provides well for the spiritual education of the children. Most lessons end in an atmosphere of prayer and thanksgiving. Children listen and respond well and display a very good attitude to the religious education.

The staff are very good role models for the children as active members of a community of faith. The children respond to this with care and support for one another. The pupils relate very well to staff and other adults around school, always acting with courtesy. They were most keen to tell the inspector about their roles on the class council and especially the heavier duties of the child who was secretary.

The school works hard to promote good multi-cultural development. During a pre-inspection visit the inspector observed a Black African experience that was part of Black History Month, the school resounded to the sound of African drummers. This is good practice.

The Y6 children are given a residential experience that has a retreat element; in addition to this they spend a day on retreat at Notre Dame High School. This also is good practice.

How good is the quality of collective worship and liturgy.

The school fulfils the statutory and diocesan requirements, through acts of worship in whole school assemblies, key stage assemblies or class based prayer times. There is a very good collective worship policy and an excellent liturgy schedule that takes account of the topics for the year, major feasts and seasons. A Harvest Festival assembly had been held recently and the food from this taken to the St. Wilfrid's Drop In Centre.

A whole school and a KS2 assembly were observed; both these acts of worship were meaningful occasions. Collective worship is firmly grounded in the Gospel. They are prayerful, give the children opportunities for reflection and help the children to respond to God's presence in their lives. The children are actively involved through prayers, readings and singing. Appropriate music is played as children enter and leave the hall and there is always an air of quiet reverence. A class led assembly ends the school week. Parents are welcome to these occasions.

How well does the school care for its pupils?

The school takes very good care of the individual needs of each person in the school community.

Measures are taken to ensure that children feel an ownership and responsibility for the school through organisations such as the class councils and the way the staff relate to them, treating them with respect and care. This care and respect is evidenced in lessons, lunch times and in the playground by all staff.

The best lessons observed were ones where the teacher used praise as a way to achieve high standards of both achievement and behaviour.

How good are the relationships between the school, parents, parishes and community?

Parents value highly the way their children are treated in school and mention this frequently in their responses to the questionnaire. There were 60 responses to the questionnaire and almost all spoke very highly of the school. Parents value the openness and warmth of the school and praise the work of the school in teaching their children Christian values.

The school has difficulties in serving five parishes but through careful planning and strengthening relationships with the priests and a parish sister, these are being overcome. This is also helped by the number of staff who are active in the parishes the school serves. All the priests now come into school and as part of the "Invitations" topic they had been invited to different activities. One parish priest visits every Wednesday and with the head and co-ordinator works well to promote the spiritual life of the school.

To promote the school within the parishes, it is planned to hold a mass in each parish each year with the school to lead this. It is also planned that there will be a school notice board in each of the parishes.

St. Marie's plays an active role in relating to the Sheffield family of schools. It regularly takes the children on visits to the Cathedral and it was as a result of one of these visits that the children set up a labyrinth in the school hall inspired by the one at the Cathedral, however the children had made it very much their own.

The children and families of St. Marie's are very generous in supporting St. Wilfrid's Drop In Centre, CAFOD, The Good Shepherd, Mission Together and occasions such as the Young Voices Celebration. This giving helps the children to understand and engage with the wider world beyond their own community.

How effective is management in the Catholic life of the school?

St. Marie's benefits from very good leadership and management of the school. The focus on the ethos of the school being one of reflective prayer and loving acceptance, together with a drive to raise standards is clear. The headteacher's clear vision and strong faith are rooted in the Gospel values that are at the heart of Catholic education.

EVIDENCE BASE

The programme of inspection included one pre-inspection visit and two full days inspection.

- Eight Religious Education lessons were observed.
- One whole school act of worship and one KS2 act of worship were observed.
- Interviews with the headteacher, the RE co-ordinator and the priest of St. Marie's were conducted.
- Discussions were held with children from all classes, parents, teachers and support staff. The headteacher and RE co-ordinator provided a very comprehensive range of documents which included most of the items on the Diocesan list. The inspector was also provided with samples of pupils' work in RE and Literacy, examples of assessment work and photographs of celebrations and topics.
- 60 parental questionnaires were returned and analysed.

SUMMARY REPORT

Information about the school

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CONCLUSION

The inspector wishes to place on record his personal thanks and appreciation for the kind co-operation received from the headteacher, staff, governors, priests, parents and children of St. Marie's school.