

Diocese of Hallam

***INSPECTION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
(Section 23 of the 1996 School Inspections Act)***

***St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Pack Horse Lane
High Green
Sheffield
S35 3HY***

Inspection Date: 13th and 15th October 2003
Diocesan Inspector: Mrs J M Bolton

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 Inspection Act, Section 13 of the Education (Schools) Act 1992 and Sections 241 and 259 of the Education Act 1993. This Inspection was conducted according to the Handbook for the Inspection of Religious Education in the Diocese of Hallam.

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

A copy of this report may be obtained from the Governors of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Pack Horse Lane, High Green, Sheffield S35 3HY 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 the School	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Type	Infant and Junior
Status	Voluntary Aided
Number on Roll	213
Age Range	4-11 years
Gender of Pupils	Mixed
Chairman of Governors	Fr. Martin Clayton
Headteacher	Mr. John Hutchinson
Address of School	Pack Horse Lane High Green Sheffield S30 4HY
Telephone Number	0114 284 8488
Date of Inspection	13 and 15 October
Diocesan Inspector	Mrs. J. M. Bolton

St Mary's Catholic Primary School was established in 1887 to serve the community of Chapel Green in the parish of St Mary's. The present school was built in 1906 and serves the mixed areas of High Green, Chapeltown and the more rural villages surrounding Wortley.

The school building is in very close proximity to the church and presbytery. The site is also shared by the convent of the Servite order.

The number on roll is 213. The school is arranged into seven year groups:

Reception	28
Y1	29
Y2	30
Y3	33
Y4	34
Y5	26
Y6	33

55% of the children are Baptised Catholics.

There are eight full time teachers including the Headteacher. The school is awaiting the recently appointed Deputy Headteacher to take up post in January 2004.

78% of the teachers are Baptised Catholics.

PART ONE

ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

1. THE MISSION OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Mary's school has a good Mission Statement, which is clearly placed in all school documentation. This Mission Statement is demonstrated in the daily life of the school.
- 1.2 The school community and the parish community work very closely together in an interdependent way to help and support each other. This is clearly demonstrated as the children prepare for Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. The Parents' sessions in the programme are used as an opportunity for adult catechesis and there are plans to extend opportunities for such catechesis.
- 1.3 The Parish Priest and staff have recently worked together to develop a Vision Statement. This process and the end product both serve to strengthen the realisation of the school's mission.
- 1.4 The Parish Priest and the Headteacher work very closely together to ensure the school is a Christ centred community.
- 1.5 The Sisters of the Servite convent work with the home, the parish and the school. They support the children in their sacramental preparation. The sisters are welcome and regular visitors to the school. The school supports the South African Servite Mission.
- 1.6 A key strength of the school is the quality of the relationships within the whole extended school community.
- 1.7 The school provides well for children with special needs. Staff and children show great awareness of and sensitivity towards these children.
- 1.8 Forty three questionnaires were returned by parents. Parents were very satisfied both with the standard of religious education and with the information they received about this aspect of their child's education. Many parents referred to the caring friendly atmosphere of the school.
- 1.9 Parents also value the way the school encourages children to be responsible for themselves and for each other.
- 1.10 The school works hard throughout the year supporting a number of charities, for example, Cafod, Children in Need, Mission Together and the NSPCC. Many of the fund raising events are organised on the initiative of the children.
- 1.11 The children also offer help to the wider community through initiatives like the Old People's Lunch Club, where the Year 6 children serve the meals every fortnight.

2. THE SCHOOL AS A WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

- 2.1 Collective worship meets statutory requirements and is celebrated daily. Sometimes this is as a whole school community, sometimes it is as groups within the school.
- 2.2 A detailed Collective Worship policy is in place.
- 2.3 Details of the weekly assemblies are carefully recorded.
- 2.4 The children enjoy their collective worship. They take a very active part, listening attentively and singing enthusiastically.
- 2.5 The Whole School Assembly demonstrated that this was one aspect of a continuum of worship within the school. There was a tangible sense of community.
- 2.6 The Key Stage 2 assembly encompassed good use of Scripture, topical subjects and a real sense of prayer. Once again, the children clearly enjoyed their singing.
- 2.7 In the Key Stage 2 class worship the children confidently led the prayer service, which they had prepared, using the model they had seen demonstrated by the adults in the school.
- 2.8 All classes had a prayer area based on the “Here I Am” topic. Often these corners provided a stimulating, age appropriate and thought provoking focus for prayer.

3. SPIRITUAL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Spiritual Development

- 3.1a The school has a detailed policy on Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education. This policy very effectively outlines the good practice in these areas of the children’s education
- 3.1b The school’s Vision and Mission statements are clearly rooted in spiritual development.
- 3.1c There is a good balance of spontaneous and traditional prayer.
- 3.1d Prayer plays a significant part in the children’s lives. In a number of situations children created prayerful expressions of their feelings both verbally and in writing.
- 3.1e The children are encouraged to pray in response to situations of life.

3.2 Moral Development

- 3.2a The moral development of children is very good.
- 3.2b There is a detailed policy document for behaviour, which incorporates clear expectations of all the school community and a code of good behaviour. It also details procedures that will follow if expectations are not met. The emphasis is always on positive reinforcement and development.
- 3.2c The school has a home/school agreement which details specific expectations of pupils, home and school.
- 3.2d Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong.
- 3.2e Pupils are also clear about their responsibilities towards each other and towards the wider community.
- 3.2f The school has a School Council. Pupils who are members of the council deal with issues not only within school but also within the wider community. This adds a new dimension to their sense of responsibility.
- 3.2g Parents value the way in which the school seeks to support the moral development of their children. They feel the school provided very well for spiritual and moral development and spoke in terms of the school promoting important values.

PART TWO

CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

4.1 Standards achieved by pupils

- 4.1a Curriculum time devoted to Religious Education is well planned and readily fulfils the requirements of the Bishop's Conference. Preparation for the First Sacraments is quite rightly carried out in the home and the Parish. However, additional time is allocated to Religious Education in school as children prepare to receive the Sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation to enable the school to support fully the preparation of the children.
- 4.1b The school follows the "Here I Am" religious education scheme.
- 4.1c Children's attainment in Religious Education is good throughout the school.
- 4.1d Written work shows clear progression and development.
- 4.1e Children's work is marked regularly. Key Stage 1 teachers particularly affirm the good work done and offer suggestions for development.
- 4.1f The children respond well to teachers' questioning and show clear evidence of the earlier work that they have covered.

4.1g Children's work is valued, appreciated and usually well displayed.

4.2 Attitudes to Learning

4.2a Children's attitudes to learning are very good throughout the school.

4.2b Children show an active and real interest in their Religious Education lessons.

4.2c A group of children in Key Stage 2 led a liturgy which they had planned and prepared. The children had complete ownership of the liturgy and confidently involved their classmates, their teacher and visitors. It was a most meaningful experience This is excellent practice.

5. QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROVIDED.

5.1 Teaching

5.1a The quality of teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to excellent.

5.1b Children in the Reception class are provided with an excellent basis for their formal Religious Education.

5.1c The best lessons demonstrated a clear understanding of the children's needs, were interesting, well paced and clearly extended children's thinking.

5.1d Lesson plans had clear learning objectives and provided a definite structure for each lesson.

5.1e All lessons demonstrated very good cross curricular links, which enhanced the Religious Education curriculum.

5.1f Particularly good use of ICT was demonstrated in a number of lessons.

5.1g Classroom support assistants enhance the provision of Religious Education. They are active members of the teaching team, who have a good knowledge of the work planned and their role in the delivery to and support of the children.

5.1h Very skilful questioning was demonstrated in some of the lessons. This really extended the children's learning.

5.2 Religious Education Curriculum and Assessment

5.2a Religious Education is central to and permeates through the whole life of the school.

5.2b The Mission Statement leads all documentation.

- 5.2c The school's Religious Education policy needs to be updated to include the excellent Vision Statement. It would be useful for the new policy to include the roles and responsibilities of the Religious Education Co-ordinator.
- 5.2d The school uses recommended diocesan assessment procedures. Each child has their own assessment book. This system has only been in place for a year but it already provides a useful basis for sound, consistent assessment.
- 5.2e The school has a good clear Special Educational Needs policy. The needs of SEN children are well served by the school.
- 5.2f There are also good, clear policies in place on Sex and Relationships Education, Behaviour, Managing Equality of Opportunity and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education.
- 5.2g Multi faith and multi cultural education is evident in the school's displays and portfolios of work.

6. THE MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

6.1 Leadership and Management

- 6.1a The school is very well led by a hard working Headteacher, who is committed to the development and care of the whole school community.
- 6.1b The Parish Priest, who is also the Chairman of the Governors, plays a crucial role in supporting the spiritual and moral development of the whole school community.
- 6.1c The provision of Religious Education is a regular feature on the schedule of staff meetings.
- 6.1d Governors and staff have put a significant amount of work into the self evaluation of the provision for Religious Education. This enables them to recognise what they have achieved and also provides very focussed priorities and targets. This is excellent practice.
- 6.1e The self evaluation document identifies the need to establish a planned programme of observations of religious education lessons.
- 6.1f The Parish Priest, Headteacher and staff value the work of the deeply committed Religious Education Co-ordinator, who quietly offers co-operation, advice, support and guidance to ensure the continuing development of Religious Education throughout the school.
- 6.1g The Headteacher provides a weekly newsletter for the parents. A significant part of this newsletter is devoted to a topic about the Catholic faith and tradition. So, for example, in the month of October the Hail Mary was included in the newsletter to enable the parents of children , who are not Catholic, to talk to their children about the rosary.

6.1h A significant amount of work has been put into the clarification and development of the role of the Governors in the life of the school. This was an issue raised at the last inspection. It has been addressed well and has had a very beneficial effect on the development of the school.

6.2 Staffing, Accommodation and Resources

6.2a All the school staff are hardworking and committed to the children. Parents value the teaching staff, who they described as excellent, committed and dedicated.

6.2b Relationships between adults and between children and adults are excellent. The quality of relationships within the community is a real strength of the school. The warmth of the greeting, welcome and support offered by the school secretary sets the tone for similar encounters throughout the school.

6.2c The variety of Religious Education resources are satisfactory and are available for use throughout the school.

6.2d A specific allocation is made each year for the purchase of Religious Education resources. The money is used effectively to further develop the provision of resources.

6.2e The school buildings are maintained to a very high standard of cleanliness by the caretaker and his team. The caretaker is a very cheerful, helpful member of the school community, who contributes a great deal to the quality of the environment.

6.2f The school hall can only just accommodate the whole school community. Space is very restricted. The good assemblies that were seen would be greatly enhanced if the accommodation was more spacious.

MAIN FINDINGS

7.1 This is a very good Catholic School.

7.2 A key strength of the school is the quality of the relationships within the school community.

7.3 The Parish Priest, Headteacher, staff and Governors work hard to ensure the school is a Christ centred community.

7.4 The school is very well lead by a hard working Headteacher.

7.5 The school provides well for children with special educational needs.

7.6 Children are well supported in developing a clear sense of right and wrong and encouraged to have a keen sense of their responsibilities.

- 7.7 The school has a rich prayer life.
- 7.8 Religious Education is a very important part of school life. The curriculum is delivered effectively by committed teachers. The children enjoy religious education lessons.
- 7.9 The school buildings are very well maintained the restricted space is used as effectively as possible.

AREAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The governors and staff of St Mary's should now:

- 1 Celebrate, maintain and continue to develop the quality relationships within the school.
- 2 Continue the excellent practice of adult catechesis referred to in discussions between the Parish Priest and the inspector, the Headteacher and the inspector and contained in the school's document "Reviewing the Distinctive provision of Religious Education in Catholic Schools - Through an on-going process of Self-Evaluation"
- 3 Review the Religious Education policy documents identified in the school development plan and update it to ensure it reflects current practice.
- 4 Begin the planned programme of lesson observations by the religious education co-ordinator which is referred to in the school's document: "Reviewing the Distinctive provision of Religious Education in Catholic Schools – Through an on-going process of Self-Evaluation"
- 5 Investigate methods of providing an assembly space to accommodate the whole school more comfortably.

CONCLUSION

The inspector would like to thank the whole school community for their help and support throughout the inspection.

APPENDIX: EVIDENCE BASE

- Lessons were observed in Foundation, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- The inspector observed a whole school assembly and a Key Stage 2 assembly.
- Formal interviews were held with the Headteacher and the Parish Priest who is also the Chair of Governors.

- Informal discussions were conducted with children, parent helpers and members of the school staff.
- Children's Religious Education books were scrutinised.
- The school also provided records and portfolios of previous work and a variety of policy documents.

SUMMARY REPORT

The major strengths in religious education, collective worship and the spiritual and moral development of the children in school:

- A key strength of the school is the quality of relationships within the whole school Community
- The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent.
- Collective worship is well planned and carefully recorded. The children enjoy their prayerful worship.
- Prayer plays a significant part in the children's life.
- The moral development of the children is very good
- The school is very well led by a hard working Headteacher, who is fully supported by a very committed Chairman of Governors and Parish Priest.

How the parents view the religious education, collective worship and moral development of their children.

- Parents are very satisfied with the standard of religious education.
- Parents are very satisfied with the amount of information they received about their children's religious education.
- Parents really value the way in which the school seeks to support the moral development of their children.

How the school has improved since the last inspection.

- All the key issues identified in the last inspection have been addressed.

Areas for further improvement following the inspection.

- Celebrate, maintain and continue to develop the quality relationships within the school.

- Continue the excellent practice of adult catechesis referred to in discussions between the Parish Priest and the inspector, the Headteacher and the inspector and contained in the school's document "Reviewing the Distinctive provision of religious Education in Catholic Schools - Through an on-going process of Self-Evaluation"
- Update the religious education policy.
- Begin the planned programme of lesson observations by the religious education co-ordinator.
- Investigate methods of providing an assembly space to accommodate the whole school more comfortably.