

INSPECTION REPORT

St Ambrose RC Primary School, Princess Road, Chorlton, Manchester, M21 7QA.

Inspection date: 29th November 2016

Reporting Inspectors: Brendan Hennessy
 Susan Molloy

Inspection carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Primary
URN	105520
Age range of pupils	3 - 11
Number on roll	219
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Gabrielle Higham
Headteacher	Ruth Vayro
Religious Education Subject Leader	Elizabeth Gibbons
Date of previous inspection	December 2011

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades 1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	
The quality of Catholic Leadership	1	
The quality of the Word	1	
The quality of the Welcome	1	
The quality of Welfare	1	
The quality of Worship	1	
The quality of Witness	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Ambrose Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School serves the parish of St Ambrose Manchester. This is an average sized primary school with 219 pupils on roll, of which 45% are baptised Roman Catholic. The school is situated in an area of mixed housing; 62% of pupils are currently entitled to free school meals. On entry to nursery the attainment of the majority of pupils is below the national average. Most pupils have made good or better progress in their learning by the time they leave at the end of KS2. The school currently has 9% of pupils with special educational needs and 22% with English as an additional language. There are 15 teachers in the school, 14 of whom are Catholic and 9 hold or have started the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. School provides before and after school provision for those children who need it. The school holds a number of national awards, is a UNICEF Rights, Respecting School and the headteacher is a member of the National School for Formation.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING

St Ambrose is an outstanding Catholic primary school where making Jesus known and loved is at the centre of everything it does. The mission statement is visible and understood by all within the school community. Gospel values are clearly evident and lived out by the whole school community. Prayer and worship is very much at the heart of this school, enriching everyone's experience of God's presence and enhancing their individual faith journeys. A strong Catholic ethos is evident throughout the school and this has helped to create a vibrant community where the happy and confident children thrive as they learn, play and pray together. The inspirational headteacher, supported by a committed RE subject leader, enthusiastic leadership team and hardworking staff, ensure that the spiritual and pastoral needs of all are met. The parish priest and governors are very supportive and committed to ensuring that Catholic education of the highest standard is provided for all. The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is consistently of a high standard across the whole school, as evidenced in lesson observations, the children's books and work around school. The friendly, well-mannered children are very proud of their school. They have an enthusiastic and positive attitude to learning. Parents feel very welcome, included and valued. They state that their children are excited to come to school and love what they do. Effective monitoring, assessment and evaluation of religious education has ensured that the school has continued to develop since the last inspection.

KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher, who has a clear, shared vision for Catholic education in the school. She is very well supported by experienced governors, who are committed to providing Catholic education of the highest standard for all in school.
- The dedicated and committed leadership team, RE subject leader and staff team who strive to ensure that the best teaching and learning experiences are delivered to the children in a stimulating environment.
- The confident, respectful and happy children who have high aspirations for themselves and each other.
- Prayer is at the heart of this school family and the children have been empowered to lead prayer and worship. They have embraced this challenge with energy, enthusiasm and creativity.
- The welcoming nature of the school, the excellent relationships and effective communication ensure a real sense of belonging and ownership across the school community.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The inspirational headteacher has a well-defined vision for Catholic education and is committed to the continual improvement of the school. She shows strong spiritual leadership and values the worth of every member of the school family. The headteacher is very well supported by a dedicated RE leader, an enthusiastic leadership team and a hard working staff team. The experienced and knowledgeable governors have a clear, strategic plan for the school and are deeply committed to the success of the school. They are proactive in providing support and challenge.

Together with the staff, they do all that they can to ensure that RE and the development of the Catholic life of the school is at the core of the school's thinking and practice. The parish priest is a regular visitor to school and all in school value his contribution to and impact on the spiritual life of the school. Pupil leadership has been established through the school council, UNICEF Rights, Respecting ambassadors and by the contribution of the very keen GIFT chaplaincy team. Self-evaluation is rigorous and robust, honest and accurate, this combined with relevant professional development for staff, has a positive impact on the quality of provision in RE. It has also ensured that school leaders know the strengths of the school and what needs to be done to develop even further. Staff, children and governors all have a voice in planning for future development. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education was found to be outstanding and permeates all aspects of school life. All school leaders set the example as role models, demonstrating a strong commitment to the Church's mission in education and making a significant contribution to the outstanding provision for Catholic education in St Ambrose.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD IS OUTSTANDING

The importance of the Word of God is clearly demonstrated all around the school in the many creative, thoughtful and enriching displays. The mission statement is at the heart of the school; it is understood, lived and witnessed by all in school as they 'grow and learn in love, hope and faith'. The religious education of the children is at the centre of the school's core curriculum and all staff place a great priority on teaching and learning of RE. High standards are consistently achieved across the school, as evidenced in the children's books, in their contributions to lessons and work displayed around school. The children are rightly very proud of their RE books and displays. The quality of teaching and learning in RE is of a high standard, with creative and inspiring lessons that engaged and challenged the children's. All the lessons observed were well planned with many common attributes: consistently high expectations, clear learning objectives, differentiated activities, challenge, good pace, engaging learning, with many opportunities for the children to share their thoughts and ideas. Thoughtful and effective questioning, including the use of The Big Questions class books, is a strength of the school and challenged the children's thinking. Constructive marking and feedback was evidently helping the children to improve their work and to reflect on their learning and understanding of RE. Teaching assistants have a very good understanding of the teaching of RE; they effectively interacted with pupils to support their learning and pastoral needs. Throughout the school Sacred Scripture is made relevant and meaningful to the children. It is known and understood by pupils and shared in many vibrant, joyful ways. The children learn about world faiths through religious education, assemblies and global links. This helps them to understand and respect the beliefs and cultures of others. Caritas in Action is used effectively to support the RE programme and the children's awareness of social justice.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

St. Ambrose offers an exceptionally warm welcome to visitors and all members of the community. A sense of belonging permeates the school. The children, staff, governors and parents are deeply proud to belong to the St Ambrose family. Parents and friends play a highly significant part in the life of the school. They have great confidence in the school and feel strongly supported in their vocation to bring up their children to experience life to the full. Families appreciate that their children are cared for in a safe and emotionally supportive environment. Any concerns are dealt with quickly and sensitively. It is clearly evident that everyone in this inclusive school is treated equally and with great respect. The formation of the school's new mission statement included all stakeholders and is integral in all aspects of daily life. Accompanying actions created by the children are designed to join everyone together and give them a voice expressing their own faith. Pupils are proud of the new uniform and badge, which reflects the mission of the school. There is a strong sense of belonging; 'smart on the outside, smart on the inside.' Children are excited to come to school and readily support and help each other. The love shown to pupils on entry to school by staff and GIFT Chaplaincy team members creates a secure learning environment. The displays throughout the school are of the highest quality. Clear communication is provided in weekly newsletters, its website, Facebook, Twitter and through pupil, staff and parent voice. The diversity of individuals is truly celebrated in the weekly ACE assemblies. Parents are very supportive of school events and a high attendance was clearly visible at the Year 5 Advent service.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

St Ambrose is an inclusive school where all staff and children demonstrate a high level of respect for and care of others in school and in the wider community. Procedures to safeguard and protect are given the highest priority. Pupils and staff feel safe and well cared for and adopt safe practices. There is a genuine concern from all staff for the welfare of pupils and Christ is used as an example for the whole community to aspire to. Pupils are encouraged to make the right choices. The older children speak with great enthusiasm about their role in supporting and caring for the younger children, as prefects, playground buddies and prayer partners. The school council, UNICEF ambassadors, GIFT chaplaincy team, eco council and prefects are developing their leadership skills and speak confidently about their role in school in supporting other children. They showed a clear understanding of the free availability of God's love and forgiveness. The children understand that it is important to help others and show compassion for those less fortunate through their support for CAFOD, Cornerstone, Caritas and St Joseph's Penny. Pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong, fair and unfair, and know what to do should they experience discrimination of any kind. There is a positive ethos in school, at the centre of which, is Christ as an example for the whole community to aspire to. The staff are great role models for the children and their team work, relationships and shared values are a real strength of the school. Excellent relationships are evident across the whole school family based on love, care and respect. The children are happy, enthusiastic, polite and well behaved. Children with additional needs are extremely well supported in school. Learning support plans are child centred and the school works closely with external agencies to support individuals who need extra provision. All pupils and staff know that they are valued members of the school family and as such understand that they each have a voice; that they are always listened to and responded to.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

Prayer is at the heart of this school and is a shared spiritual experience integral to the life of the school as it seeks to become a true worshipping community. The many and varied opportunities offered for prayer and worship in school have enhanced the individual faith journeys of all. The importance of prayer and worship is expressed and witnessed through classroom acts of reflection, meditation, spontaneous prayer, assemblies, Mass and liturgies. The chapel, prayer garden and other focal points for prayer, display and reflection are situated at key areas in the school. The children lead assemblies and understand the purpose of these opportunities to worship together as brothers and sisters in Christ. They effectively use *Lectio Divina*; read, meditate, pray and contemplate, to help their preparation and delivery of worship. The acts of collective worship, Advent prayer service and acts of worship and prayer within lessons observed during the inspection, provided opportunities for listening, participation and reflection. They were without exception uplifting, inclusive, creative and thoughtful spiritual experiences for all present. Children took a leading role in all the acts of prayer and worship observed. These special moments of prayer and reflection were beautifully respected by the children. The introduction of the GIFT chaplaincy team and UNICEF RRS ambassadors has had a significant, positive impact on prayer and worship. The children pray together as a school, in classes, small groups and individually, with great reverence and respect; they are comfortable with their feelings and confident to write and share their own prayers. The Y3 and Y6 children have annual retreats at the Marist centre. The parish priest regularly visits the school helping the staff and children deepen their own faith and understanding. The school supports children and families on the sacramental programme with a much valued input from the parish catechist. Parents were extremely positive about the range of opportunities the school offers for prayer and worship and really appreciate input from the children.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

The mission statement is known, lived and witnessed by all in the community. Gospel values are evidenced in policies and procedures and have a significant impact on learning and daily life. The children have a highly defined sense of fairness and justice evidenced through Caritas in Action and work towards the UNICEF Rights Respecting Award. The Living SEF books clearly illustrate how God is at the centre of everything. The school regards itself as a family with strong relationships built on love and trust. Families that find themselves in challenging circumstances are offered support and nurture through CARITAS social work and a behavioural consultant. Pupils reflect on their roles as future citizens and understand how to help others and make a positive difference in the world. The school witnesses to the wider community and supports CAFOD,

homelessness and Disaster Emergency Fund collections. Children are actively encouraged and supported in being proactive citizens who participate in building community. They are involved in decision making processes at school, at local, national and global level. The school fosters a spirit of awe and wonder. Children want to learn and are curious and considerate. The newly created GIFT garden, creates an outside environment which helps the children to explore, be creative and appreciate God's creation. The school is very effective in encouraging and supporting its pupils to develop a relationship with God. Observations during the inspection showed that children treated each other with respect, care, patience, concern and dignity. The GIFT chaplaincy team is having a positive impact on the life of the school. There is a great sense of teamwork, belonging and celebration of success at all levels among the staff, children and parents.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- To share the work of Lectio Divina and child led model of worship with a wider network of catholic schools.
- To build on the flourishing partnership with parents to further enhance the Catholic life of the school and achieve the kite mark already identified in the development of parent partnership.

29th November 2016

Dear Children,

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us and for making our visit to St Ambrose RC Primary School such a joyful and uplifting occasion. We really enjoyed our time with you. Everyone in school is indeed inspired by Jesus and you all work so hard to always do your best, and because of this your school is an outstanding Catholic school. You showed us in so many ways that you really do live out your school motto, 'Loving minds, hearts and hands'.

It was lovely to see so many happy, smiling faces. You are clearly very proud of your school and all that you have achieved together. We were also very impressed by the way you want to succeed in school, how well you look out for each other, your behaviour and good manners.

We really enjoyed seeing your lessons and learning about all the wonderful things you do in school. We were very impressed with the high standard of work in your RE books, your contributions in all the lessons we saw and in your wonderful displays around school. Thank you for sharing your work with us. It was clear to us that you have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and that you all really try your best in all of your lessons.

It was so pleasing to see how attentive and confident you were in the acts of prayer and worship we shared with you. They were all inspirational and every one of you showed great respect and reverence. Your behaviour was excellent, your singing was fantastic and your prayers were uplifting. The GIFT chaplaincy team and UNICEF RRS ambassadors set a wonderful example for you all to follow.

The staff, school governors and your parents are extremely proud of you and of what you have achieved over the years. Well done and keep it up!

Your teachers are keen to work with you to build the Catholic life of your school even further so that you can all continue to grow as leaders of our faith in school.

God bless you all and enjoy the rest of the school year.

Mr Brendan Hennessy and Mrs Susan Molloy
(Section 48 Inspectors)

Summary Report to Parents

On 26th November 2016 the school was inspected in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The full report has been made available to the school and can also be accessed via both the school website and the Education section on the website of the Diocese of Salford.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING

St Ambrose is an outstanding Catholic primary school where making Jesus known and loved is at the centre of everything it does. The mission statement is visible and understood by all within the school community. Gospel values are clearly evident and lived out by the whole school community. Prayer and worship is very much at the heart of this school, enriching everyone's experience of God's presence and enhancing their individual faith journeys. A strong Catholic ethos is evident throughout the school and this has helped to create a vibrant community where the happy and confident children thrive as they learn, play and pray together. The inspirational headteacher, supported by a committed RE subject leader, enthusiastic leadership team and hardworking staff, ensure that the spiritual and pastoral needs of all are met. The parish priest and governors are very supportive and committed to ensuring that Catholic education of the highest standard is provided for all. The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is consistently of a high standard across the whole school, as evidenced in lesson observations, the children's books and work around school. The friendly, well-mannered children are very proud of their school. They have an enthusiastic and positive attitude to learning. Parents feel very welcome, included and valued. They state that their children are excited to come to school and love what they do. Effective monitoring, assessment and evaluation of religious education has ensured that the school has continued to develop since the last inspection.

KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher, who has a clear, shared vision for Catholic education in the school. She is very well supported by experienced governors, who are committed to providing Catholic education of the highest standard for all in school.
- The dedicated and committed leadership team, RE subject leader and staff team who strive to ensure that the best teaching and learning experiences are delivered to the children in a stimulating environment.
- The confident, respectful and happy children who have high aspirations for themselves and each other.
- Prayer is at the heart of this school family and the children have been empowered to lead prayer and worship. They have embraced this challenge with energy, enthusiasm and creativity.
- The welcoming nature of the school, the excellent relationships and effective communication ensure a real sense of belonging and ownership across the school community.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- To share the work of Lectio Divina and child led model of worship with a wider network of catholic schools.
- To build on the flourishing partnership with parents to further enhance the Catholic life of the school and achieve the kite mark already identified in the development of parent partnership.