

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Guardian Angels is a one form entry Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school in the Diocese of Salford, which along with its sister school, Our Lady of Lourdes, serves the parish of Our Lady of Good Counsel and Guardian Angels. The majority of the pupils are of white British heritage. The age range of pupils is from 3-11 years. The indicative admission number is 30 and there are presently 237 pupils on roll including a 30 pupil part time nursery class. On starting school children's developments are broadly typical of the age group. 237 of the learners (100%) are baptised Catholics. 7 of the pupils (3%) are eligible for free school meals and 40 (17%) have been identified as having special educational needs with 2 children having a statutory statement of special educational need. 11 out of the 12 teachers (91.5%) are Catholics. 10 teachers have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies or the equivalent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Overall Guardian Angels is an outstanding Catholic school. The headteacher, governing body and staff of the school share the same vision of constantly seeking to develop further the very good practice already evident in the school. The Catholic life of the school is a strength producing a warm, welcoming and caring environment in which all aspects of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are of a very high standard. Pupils are happy, well-behaved, polite and friendly. The children display a very good attitude to learning which is a credit to both themselves and the staff of the school. Teaching is good overall with some outstanding teaching observed during the inspection. Pupil achievement in Religious Education is consistently good through both key stages and outstanding in upper Key Stage 2. Members of staff are positive role models for pupils and are dedicated, committed and hard working. The curriculum has been reviewed so that skills taught in one subject support other subjects. The Religious Education curriculum has been further enhanced by the school's Religious Education Overview Planning based on the Salford Diocese *REvision 2000* syllabus but incorporating other Religious Education schemes, opportunities for prayer and worship, the study of world faiths and community outreach. The children enjoy their education in a very happy and secure atmosphere engendered by the exemplary relationships that exist between all members of the school community. The links between the school and the parish are strengthened by the committed work of the inspirational parish priest who actively ensures that the school and parish are as one.

Improvement since the last inspection

Since the last Religious Education inspection in April 2003 the school has addressed the issues identified and resolved them. The school has reviewed its Mission Statement twice, developed the use of information technology in the Religious Education curriculum and introduced interactive whiteboards into every class. The assessment of Religious Education has been implemented and established in preparation for staff to start the process of levelling learners' attainment in Religious Education.

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to improve is good because the headteacher, leadership team and governors have a shared vision for their school and are working closely together to realise that vision. The capacity to improve in Religious Education is outstanding because areas for further development in Religious Education have been identified in the school's Self Evaluation and Development Plan for Religious Education and Experience at Guardian Angels Roman Catholic Primary School and strategies to bring about planned improvements have been put in place.

What the school should do to improve further

- Complete the planned review of the prayer and worship policy.
- Continue to establish, monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the Salford diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education in the light of the revised diocesan syllabus.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. The parish priest, who is also the governor with responsibility for Religious Education, and the governing body provide strong support and encouragement to the outstanding headteacher and leadership team in the very effective promotion of the Catholic life of the school. The governing body is passionate about Catholic education and governs the school effectively through its committee structure. Links between the school, home and church are fostered by the dedicated work of the parish priest and the staff of the school. At the meeting for new parents the parish priest joins the headteacher in welcoming new parents and presents each one with a Parish Welcome Pack. Community cohesion is an important feature of the school's philosophy. The governing body have a well established community committee with its own remit. In recent years the governors have set the headteacher performance management objectives directly linked to promoting the Catholic life of the school. The school's Mission Statement can be traced through its policies and is displayed through the school in child friendly language so that children can 'follow Jesus by loving, valuing and respecting each other'. The school's Self Evaluation and Development Plan for Religious Education has been written so that each planned action reflects a section of the school's Mission Statement. Members of the school's elected school council were able to discuss their religion and illustrate how the school leadership provides the learners with a voice in school.

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The provision for collective worship is outstanding. A programme of class Masses as well as Masses on special occasions for the whole school is planned in collaboration with the parish priest. During Advent children from both parish primary schools come together to celebrate Mass in church. The headteacher leads a whole school assembly each week to include the celebration of pupil achievements. Teachers take it in turn to lead a weekly key stage assembly aided by children from their classes. Every term each class takes it in turn to lead an assembly for the whole school and parents. During inspection the assembly led by a Year 1 class, based on the theme of helping others, was well attended by parents who saw their children act out Jesus calming the sea. They displayed their artistic illustrations, sang, spoke clearly and led prayers. The Key Stage 2 assembly, led by a teacher, was outstanding. It was based on the Mission Statement and the recognition of talents and the theme continued to produce a tremendous pupil response after the assembly had finished. For the next week children were invited to identify talents in others and place post-it notes on a display board. By the end of the day the board was already overflowing. The Sacramental Programme for both primary schools is prepared and led by the parish through the parish co-ordinator and team of catechists. Children participating in the Sacramental Programme are matched with a prayer partner from Year 6. Other prayer initiatives in school include 'Post a Prayer' and 'Pick a Prayer'. The school is encouraged to complete its planned review of its prayer and worship policy.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Achievement and standards in Religious Education are good with outstanding features. The children make consistently good progress in Religious Education as evidenced by the scrutiny of children's work, teacher planning and lessons observed during the inspection. Teaching methods used in the school are appropriate to the age and ability of the children with a consistent expectation of high standards. This is particularly evident at the end of Key Stage 2 by which time learners have a very good factual knowledge of their faith and show a genuine interest in their Religious Education lessons. During the Year 4 lesson observed the more able children were challenged by thought provoking questions such as "What might Jesus have thought at the time of his baptism?" and "What might he have said in prayer to his father?" The children rose to the challenge. In a Year 6 lesson about vocations the children were asked to complete a prepared matrix by researching the life of a monk from the Buckfast Abbey website. The added challenge required learners to identify the personal qualities needed in order to live the life of a monk. The relationships between teacher and pupils and between the pupils themselves are a major reason why the high expectations of the school are met. The pupils listen to each other, support and help each other during lessons. As a means of retaining the high standards the inspector encourages the school to continue to establish, monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the Salford diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines for curriculum Religious Education in the light of the revised diocesan syllabus.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education is good with outstanding features. All lessons observed during the inspection were good with some outstanding teaching. All classes made good use of the interactive whiteboards while the scrutiny of exercise books showed how imaginatively the subject is being consistently taught in upper Key Stage 2. A Year 5 lesson sought to ‘inspire the children to help others by becoming involved in a parish based charity’. The lesson was well planned and resourced so that it engrossed the attention of the children. The tasks then set for the children were differentiated and offered excitement so as to inspire the children in line with the lesson objective. The children completing an independent task during a Year 3 lesson about baptism were a credit to their teacher as they concentrated on completing their task. The teaching methods used in all lessons were appropriate to the age and ability of the children. The nursery children acted out the baptism ceremony and the reception children visited the church to identify objects they had been introduced to by an interactive whiteboard display prior to the visit. The scrutiny of exercise books showed that differentiation in the tasks set was mainly by outcome or through the support of able teaching assistants. The challenge for the most able children witnessed during the inspection was not always present in the work in exercise books. Marking of pupils’ work is carried out regularly and praises good work but where teacher marking is at its best is where teachers seek to improve further the learner’s understanding and communication skills.

THE QUALITY OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is outstanding. The significance of curriculum Religious Education in the school is visible through displays, the presence of religious artefacts and a focal point for prayer in every classroom. The school has carried out a rigorous audit of its Religious Education curriculum through its Welcome: A Self Evaluation and Development Plan for Religious Education and Experience. As a result the school has sought to develop the Religious Education curriculum through the development of its own Overview Planning. The Overview Planning for Religious Education curriculum is based on the Salford diocesan *REVision 2000* syllabus but widens the scope of the syllabus by identifying resources from other schemes of work, planned prayer and worship, the study of World Faiths and opportunities for community outreach while remaining aware of the developments taking place within the *REvision 2000* syllabus. The school has carefully structured its adoption of the Salford diocesan assessment and standardisation guidelines so that its work on assessment is based on a firm foundation. Regular inclusion of Religious Education on the agenda of staff meetings and governors’ meetings ensures that its profile within the school remains high and that Religious Education curriculum is under constant review and development. Evidence of children’s work from Religious Education lessons is on display in classrooms and shared areas. In order to maintain standards the school has an established programme for monitoring teaching and learning in curriculum Religious Education

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership and management of curriculum Religious Education are outstanding. The chair of governors and parish priest are regular visitors to the school and communicate well with the school’s headteacher and staff with regard to the Catholic life of the school. The parish priest, who serves as the appointed a governor with special responsibility for Religious Education, meets regularly with the school’s Religious Education co-ordinator and is particularly active in linking home, school and parish. The school is blessed with a committed and enthusiastic Religious Education co-ordinator who has been responsible for leading the staff in developing and producing both the school’s Self Evaluation and Development Plan for Religious Education and the subsequent Religious Education Planning Overview. The work of the Religious Education co-ordinator supported and encouraged by the dedicated headteacher, the school’s senior leadership team and staff is central to the success and high standing enjoyed by Religious Education in the school. The parish priest, governors and leadership of the school actively promote their shared vision of what a Catholic school, at the heart of the Catholic community, should be. At Guardian Angels school Religious Education impacts on every area of school life so that Religious Education curriculum, prayer and worship and living the faith complement each other.