

INSPECTION REPORT

St Matthew's RC High School, Nuthurst Road, Moston, Manchester, M40 0EW

Inspection date 17 June 2016
 Reporting Inspectors Mr Simon A Smith
 Mr Michael Wright

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

Type of School Voluntary Aided
 URN 105577
 Age range of pupils 11-16
 Number on roll 1145
 Appropriate authority The Governing Body
 Chair of Governors Mr I Worrall
 Headteacher Mr K Hogan
 Head of Religious Education Ms J Cartwright
 Date of previous inspection June 2011

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

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Matthew's is a slightly larger than average High School situated in the Moston area of North Manchester, in a Ward which is one of the most deprived in the country. The school serves the eight parishes of St Dunstan's, St John Bosco, Christ the King, Our Lady of Mt Carmel, St Edmund's and St Margaret Mary's, St John Vianney and St Mary's, drawing primarily from a partnership of seven primary schools. Around 90% of the pupils attending the school are baptised Roman Catholics. A high proportion of pupils are in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM); at 26%, this above the national average. The percentage of pupils who are disadvantaged is 46%. Around a fifth of pupils are not white British, giving a diversity and richness to the school population. 21 pupils have an education health and care plan and 74 pupils have additional needs. Exclusion rates are around the national average. A number of staff have completed the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies and senior leaders have completed the Catholic leadership programme.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Matthew's is a good school overall, where the mission statement of "we pray, we care, we achieve" is central to the work of the school. Governors and school leaders are clear in their mission for all pupils and inclusive to the most vulnerable. Partnerships with parents and the local community are strong, as are the ties with partner primary schools. Tolerance, respect, reconciliation and love for all are qualities exhibited and described by pupils, staff and governors, and they are nurtured at all times in a full range of situations. Positive relationships form the basis on which pupils are encouraged and loved to grow in their faith. This is supported by the adult community, who articulated and displayed a very strong commitment to their place of work. They are unified in a common purpose to celebrate and build upon the successes of the local Catholic community. Pupils continue to make progress in religious education and the gap between RE and English continues to close quickly. The school reaches out to the community through effective outreach work that takes place with partner parishes and primary schools. This provides good groundwork for on-going formation and induction to the school.

KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- Quickly improving outcomes as a result of consistently good and often outstanding teaching in religious education.
- Strong and visionary leadership at all levels ensures the school's mission as a Catholic school is made known to all.
- An inclusive approach to pupils and staff welfare, creating a happy and dynamic environment in which to learn and work.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS GOOD

The governing body, headteacher and leadership team have strong and visionary leadership, which is shared by staff, pupils and parents. The self-assessment against the framework is very accurate and correctly identifies the many strengths of the school as well as the areas for further development. Governors are well informed and passionate about the school and operate with the correct balance of challenge and support, providing clear strategic direction with the school's mission statement at the centre of all key decisions that are taken. They are provided with good information about the Catholic life of the school by the leadership team and the RE department. In this way, they ensure that the school fulfils its mission for the pupils. The support for pupils facing difficulties is excellent, the pastoral care and work of the inclusion team ensures that all children have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and receive good quality formation. Since the previous Section 48 inspection, good leadership at all levels has had impact, for example, in the continuing development of partnership work, in ensuring the school's mission is a living mission, and is clear to all members of the school in everyday situations. Good leadership has also seen a steady increase in the outcomes pupils achieve in religious education, so it is nearly in line with those for English. There is a strong commitment to professional development which involves not just staff from St Matthew's, but staff from the wider partnership of schools coming together focussed on developing spirituality. The drive for closer cooperation by senior leaders to

further develop what pupil leaders described as 'our St Matthew's family' was very much evidenced during the inspection. Senior leaders are proactive in their engagement with primary partners as members of the governing board, for example.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD IS GOOD

The religious education department is very well led. The style of leadership is inclusive and innovative; the impact of this is evidenced in the quality of RE lessons observed, which were all good. A smaller number were outstanding. The time allocation and programmes followed are all appropriate and planning has already taken place to accommodate the changes to the new GCSE specifications. The vision the department team have is for excellence and all leadership decisions, professional development and collaborative work support this ambition. Lessons are fun, engaging and challenging. This is because teachers know the importance of religious education in the ongoing formation of their pupils and how they can maintain an engagement and positive interaction with pupils as they progress through school. Scripture is seen as important to the work undertaken and in other curriculum areas. The Word of God is carefully considered in a wide area of subjects, pupils' religious literacy is being developed, used and understood. In some lessons, spiritual, moral, social and cultural education may not be as integrated as it could be in relation to the Word of God, but teachers are aware of its value and benefits. Feedback to pupils is very constructive and allows many pupils the opportunity to think and reflect on their faith journey and make comments to their teachers' feedback. This is a strength of the department work and supports the development of pupils' religious literacy. Lesson planning by RE teachers is of a high standard. Discussions are pupils based and a cohesive assessment system across the school helps pupils make progress in their learning. Pupils commented they 'know where they are going' with their learning journey in RE and that positive relationships greatly assist in this. Many staff, regardless of their position in school, are seen as role models by all pupils, but especially the vulnerable and challenged.

THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

Welcome is outstanding because all members of the school's community take every opportunity to play an active role in welcoming visitors to St Matthew's. They take a great pride in showcasing the school through various school, community and diocesan events. The school's mission statement of "we pray, we care, we achieve" is evident in words and actions, for example, in the positive relationships seen throughout the inspection. During the inspection a Year 6 primary school class was visiting for the day and many pupils told of the warm welcome and friendly atmosphere they had experienced. Pupil helpers were clearly involved and enjoying the leadership opportunities afforded them. Parents are clearly welcomed and involved in school life. In particular, those parents of the vulnerable are made to feel welcomed; enjoy outstanding parental communication and positive relationships with staff. Former pupils retain close links with the school and in some cases, as staff members and teachers. This helps to maintain and build this strong sense of family, which was clearly articulated during the inspection visit. Frequent activities take place which welcome the local community to the school and through outreach visits, including sport, chaplaincy and the Catholic partnership of local primary schools. A mass of welcome is one of the first activities that Year 7 pupils undertake after joining the school in September. This makes them feel valued, special and part of the St Matthew's family. This is held in high esteem by the whole community.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

Pupils show respect for each other and undertake frequent acts of compassion and kindness to others which contributes significantly to the outstanding judgement. Pastoral care is outstanding, a strength, and the school's mission statement identifies 'care' as one of the core values. Pupils and adults are safe, because of the very high quality of safeguarding protocols. Those in greatest need benefit the most from charitable acts of mercy and kindness. The beautifully presented learning support area provides a safe haven for the most vulnerable and provides high quality support for those pupils with additional needs. The inclusion team works closely with external agencies in order to provide quality support, advice and guidance. Pupils talked about the benefits of external speakers. Older pupils commented on the work undertaken to counter radicalisation and conflict resolution. The organisation of the school into a vertical house system, as well as year groups, enhances and helps to build positive relationships between adults and pupils. The 'guardian angels', prefects,

mentors and captains secure an outstanding support mechanism, which is both developmental in academic terms and formative in helping others' grow in their faith. This is supported by a strong GIFT team; chaplaincy. Pupils are well led to support liturgy and masses, through preparing readings, meditations and visual aids, such as dance. This encourages many pupils to showcase their talents. Sex and Relationship Education is delivered through RE and science. The teachings of the church are well communicated, especially concerning the dignity of the human person. Pupils are able to discuss and form a view on sensitive matters. During the inspection, one class discussed the Middle Eastern conflicts, which are resulting in population displacement to Europe. The discussion was well crafted and handled by the teacher in a wonderful way, which clearly promoted gospel values and Catholic social teaching; the school's mission statement in action.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS GOOD

Prayer is at the heart of this school's community. Worship is continually being driven as a vehicle for pupils and staff, in school and beyond, for formation, spiritual growth and development. One of the very first actions new members of the school's community take part in is a 'welcome mass'. Year 7 greatly value sharing what is common to them and celebrating the Eucharist together, as a family. Similarly, all form groups begin the school day with prayer and reflections. New staff are supported in how to engage in prayer with young people as part of their induction to the school. During the inspection, inspectors observed a house assembly. This was a wonderful celebration of faith, achievements, individual and collective successes. It was delivered in an innovative way which engaged everyone as a community. Staff equally benefit from prayer opportunities each week; staff come together to pray and these opportunities are greatly valued as time for recollection, reconciliation and reflection. Different members of staff lead the prayers each week and this provides a fresh perspective on liturgy. The chaplaincy team is very well led and the team are growing and beginning to make an impact in aspects of school life. Although the team continues to grow, it is starting to make an impact in the religious life of the school. The school has wonderful aspirations for chaplaincy, but may wish to consider the available capacity to make this a reality. The school values the involvement of local clergy. When possible, clergy attend school to celebrate the Eucharist and to be a visible presence to pupils and staff. Recently, clergy celebrated the annual Year 11 leavers' Mass. Pupils were active in their involvement in planning for it, in particular, the reflection and Liturgy of the Word. Year 11 pupils told the inspectors how valued they feel 'our St Matthew's family' by the inclusive nature of liturgies and prayers that took place in the week before the final mass of celebration. They reflected well on the spiritual journey through St Matthew's. They articulated how opportunities to worship had brought them together as a year group. Retreat opportunities when they were in Years 7 and 8 were described as pivotal in their formation and spiritual renewal and development.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

The school renewed its mission statement in 2014. It is summarised as "we pray, we care, we achieve". The witness to Christian values is clearly articulated by staff and pupils, who are proud to belong to the community of St Matthew's. Pupils take their responsibility of caring for each other seriously. The 'guardian angel' system complements the vertical tutor groups by providing role models and support for younger pupils. Relationships throughout the school are based on care and dignity. The junior leadership team provides a forum for pupils to have a voice within the school and plans are in place to develop this further. Pupils are also keen to play a part in delivering the school's mission through involvement in charitable events, raising money and awareness for local, national and global charities such as Cornerstone, EducAid and the popular Christmas hamper collection. Pupils spoke of the care and support shown by adults and other pupils at the school that are clearly based on Gospel values. They were able to identify the structured themes for collective worship as a factor that helps to bind the school together as a family. One pupil described how attending voluntary Mass regularly made her feel 'blessed for the day'. In lesson observations, issues such as stewardship of the earth and dignity of the individual were delivered in an engaging and sensitive manner. A lesson on contraception was skilfully taught to allow pupils to explore the moral arguments around the issue within the context of the teachings of the Catholic Church. Visitors to school help to bring aspects of the curriculum to life and pupils and staff spoke highly of the impact of talks on the theme of mercy and forgiveness.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- Continue to develop opportunities for pupils to undertake an active role in engaging in the missionary life of parishes.
- Consider the appointment of a lay chaplain or provide appropriate time for the chaplaincy coordinator to support worship.
- Further enhance explicit reference to Catholic teaching in social, moral, spiritual and cultural education across the curriculum in order that pupils can connect, understand and see the relevancy of Church teaching in all their learning.

June 2016

Dear Pupils

Thank you for welcoming us to your school during our visit a few weeks ago. You have a wonderful school that reflects well on all your community and, of course, yourselves! Supported really well by the governors and Mr Hogan, all the staff in your school continually strive for excellence every day and work very hard to build up a sense of family and community. They keep your school's mission statement 'we pray, we care, we achieve' at the heart of everything they do for you.

During our visit, we observed lessons in religious education, geography, history, IT, technology and German. We also listened to a house assembly and participated in some form time. Over lunch, we met two groups of pupils including a group in Year 11 who remained after an exam to talk to us about their St Matthew's journey. The quality of what they had to say was impressive and you should be proud to be a part of this school's family. We were especially impressed with how you support and look after more vulnerable members of your school community and how your faith spurs you on to make a difference in other people's lives. You should be congratulated for your fundraising efforts for a number of local charities.

The governors and senior leadership team have very high aspirations for you all. They will now work together to see how you might become a closer part of parish life and experience more about your faith in lessons other than religious education.

You attend a really good, Catholic school. You should be very proud of that.

Yours sincerely

Mr S A Smith
Mr M Wright
Section 48 Inspectors

Summary Report to Parents

On 17th June 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.

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