



## **CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL**

Our Lady's is voluntary aided, Roman Catholic primary school in the diocese of Salford serving the parish of Our Lady, Haigh and Aspull. The school is in the village of Aspull on the outskirts of Wigan. A small minority of pupils (15%) live outside Wigan in neighbouring areas of Bolton. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The school is smaller than average with an admission number of 30. Currently, there are 162 pupils on roll of whom 130 are baptised Roman Catholics. Pupils are taught in 7 single age classes. 8% of pupils are eligible for free school meals and Pupil Premium Grant, which is below the national average. 9.8% of pupils have been identified as having a special educational need of some kind; 2 of these pupils have Education Health Care Plans and 2 pupils are in local authority care (CLA). The overwhelming majority of pupils (96%) are white British and pupil stability is 90%. There are 8 teachers including the headteacher all of whom are Catholic, 4 of these 8 teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING**

Our Lady's is an outstanding Catholic primary school. It has a contemporary mission statement, produced following consultation with all stakeholders and a strong Catholic ethos at the very centre of everything it does. It is very successful in offering its pupils a holistic, Catholic education in a warm, friendly and supportive environment. All pupils are encouraged to be the very best they can be at all times. The governors place their trust in the very dedicated headteacher, his deputy and assistant headteacher. The highly skilled teaching and support staff are totally committed to the school and the pupils. Relationships are outstanding being based on the Gospel values of Jesus Christ. All pupils make very good or outstanding progress including those with SEND. Relationships between home, school and parish are outstanding. The collaborative working of the home, school and parish ensures the pastoral, spiritual, social and emotional needs of the pupils and their families are fully met. Throughout the day of inspection pupils were outstandingly well behaved, respectful and considerate towards each other and the adults around them. Lessons observed ranged from good to outstanding. The well informed and active governing body has a well-established role in monitoring the work of the school and is immensely proud of the school achievements. Parents are committed to the school, believe that it is constantly seeking to improve the quality of its provision and feel very much part of its daily life.

Following the last Section 48 inspection (2011) issues identified for improvement have been addressed.

## **KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:**

- The quality of relationships across the school; the respect, dignity and care shown to every individual within the school community.
- The strong leadership and dedication of the headteacher, supported by an enthusiastic and committed deputy, RE subject leader and governors.
- The welfare of pupils and staff which is of paramount importance.
- The well informed and effective governing body.

## **THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING**

The leadership of the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The dedicated headteacher, supported by his deputy and other leaders, is totally committed to providing strong, Catholic leadership for the school. The headteacher and RE subject leader share a clear understanding of the nature of Catholic education and together with other members of the leadership team, promote the Catholic life of the school highly effectively. The governing body is well led by the chair who is also the parish priest. The headteacher and RE leader provide detailed reports to the governing body that ensures that all aspects of school life are brought to its attention. The governors trust the judgement of key leaders and provide the necessary support. Some governors provide in-class support, attend school events and attend training provided by the diocese and LA. Funding for RE resources is readily available. RE teaching enjoys at least 10% of available teaching time. The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and is committed to supporting and encouraging the

religious welfare of pupils and staff. The school provides excellent support to the sacramental programme. Parents are kept well informed about school activities via newsletters, tweets and blogs, in addition to a regularly updated website. Parents spoke highly and enthusiastically about the school; many of the families have a long association with the school that covers several generations. The school promotes community cohesion by helping pupils appreciate the range of religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds in school and the wider community. The school has a strong commitment to the most vulnerable having in place systems to ensure these pupils thrive in a supportive, harmonious and safe learning environment. Older pupils are members of the chaplaincy team and are developing their key roles in leading prayer and worship in different ways across the school.

### **THE QUALITY OF THE WORD IS OUTSTANDING**

The contemporary mission statement is at the very centre of the Catholic life of the school. It is known, lived and witnessed throughout the school; pupils know well the key words and are able and willing to speak confidently about their beliefs and values and how the mission statement influences their lives and learning. Classroom displays are of a high standard throughout the school; each classroom has a prayer focus area that shows traditional prayers and pupil composed prayers alongside religious images and artefacts. Displays on corridors and in other areas are all tangible, vibrant evidence of the word of God influencing the religious life of the whole community. Good quality acts of collective worship in key stage 1 and 2 were observed; bible readings, pupil led prayer, traditional prayer and singing were all evidenced. The content was relevant, age appropriate, respectful and reverent and clearly showed the school's developmental approach to prayer and worship. In all observed lessons the pupils benefitted from thoughtful teaching complemented by the effective deployment of support staff; as a result teaching and learning was always good or outstanding. Learning was enriched and extended by a judicious use of ICT (IWB, ipads, laptops and tweets) music, singing and drama. Teachers are confident in guiding children, at their own level and pace, in understanding the more complex issues of faith. Older key stage 2 pupils were happy to work independently and collaboratively in order to produce work of high quality. Pupils referenced their work to scripture. 'Big question' books are to be found in each classroom and are used to instigate discussions. The standard of work in RE books is in line with standards in Literacy books. Marking is consistent across the school with teachers providing clear feedback and the next steps in learning; firm evidence that RE is of paramount importance. In all classes there was a calm, purposeful atmosphere conducive to learning.

### **THE QUALITY OF WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING**

The welcome extended to all visitors to Our Lady's is outstanding. There is a common vision built on gospel values and the school mission statement. This is a very happy and joyful school. Pupils were found to be very confident in speaking to the inspectors and ensuring they were looked after. The school actively seeks to engage with and support members of the community and this is very much appreciated by the parents. The collaborative work of the home, school and parish ensures the pastoral, spiritual, social and emotional needs of the pupils and their families are met. The respect for each person and genuine love and caring was witnessed repeatedly in classrooms, on corridors, in the dining room and in the playground. Pupil members of the chaplaincy team were happy to give up their own time to read extracts of scripture to younger pupils in order to support their religious development. A Yr 5 pupil was able to explain how all pupils understood the purpose of the 'friendship bench' and finished the conversation with, 'I love this place!' Pupils understand that there are some pupils who have special educational needs in their school but say that they are happy for them to be part of a school where they can be helped and supported by everyone else. The importance of the dignity of the individual is clearly evidenced at all times. A strong commitment to safeguarding in no way compromises the genuinely warm welcome. Relationships between all pupils and staff are outstanding which encourages a sense of belonging, community, acceptance and real value. Everybody is proud of their school. There is a number of well-established staff, recently qualified and newly qualified staff all of whom feel equally welcomed and valued as part of the staff team. The school has an effective induction programme for NQT's which successfully inducts them into the Catholic life of the school. Governors spoke of the fact that whenever they arrive in school they are always made welcome, 'even if I don't have an appointment!'

### **THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING**

The community of Our Lady's demonstrates high levels of respect and care for each other and for the fabric of their school building, which is warm, clean and bright. Wall displays show clearly to pupils that their contributions to school life are highly valued. Pupils are provided with a safe and secure environment in which all procedures to safeguard and protect are fully endorsed. Pupils are confident that any concerns they might have will be dealt with promptly and effectively by any adult in the school. Pupils are encouraged to make the right choices, they are confident to express their opinion and know these will be valued. This has produced pupils that are caring, with a keen sense of right and wrong. Pupils are happy to say how much they enjoy coming to school. When asked about bullying pupils stated that it was not an issue as everyone knows exactly what to do if there are any problems! The calm support offered by adults ensures learning and relationships are constantly being re-enforced, strengthened and enhanced. This was exemplified when a teacher was observed dealing with a key stage 2 pupil who was having difficulty staying on task. The pupil was taken to one side, spoken to quietly, but firmly and with some compassion, before returning to work almost un-noticed by the other pupils. This Christ centred ethos is loving and positive thus fostering understanding, empathy and forgiveness. The classrooms are nurturing places. Teachers speak quietly to pupils, no shouting or raised voices were heard during the day. This contributes significantly to the welfare and well-being of the pupils and staff. Nurture and intervention groups offer a range of support to those pupils identified as requiring additional and differentiated provision. The school offers a range of clubs and activities to develop the whole person. Parental concerns are dealt with effectively; should a parent call into school they are seen as soon as possible. They greatly appreciate the school's open door policy.

### **THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING**

The whole school practice of prayer and worship ensures a wide range of creative opportunities to develop and enrich the prayer life of the community and for this reason is judged as outstanding. Staff and pupils are skilled in the planning and leading of prayer and worship. During the inspection day two acts of collective worship were observed, in both, pupils were actively involved in the planning and delivery of the thoughtful and creative experience. Both activities were holistic, pupil centred and entirely relevant to the experience and age of those involved. Pupils can recite traditional prayers as well as being able to compose their own; they readily and eagerly develop their relationship with God through music, song and drama. Pupils pray at key points during the day, each classroom has a prayer focus area that often displays pupil's private prayers, thoughts and reflections. Pupils pray with reverence and respect. Each week the school gathers together in order to celebrate the achievements of pupils and thank God for the talents we all possess. Celebrations take place throughout the year following the liturgical calendar. Christmas, Easter and Lenten celebrations are always well attended by parents. Parents are appreciative of the fact that pupils learn traditional prayers as this enables them to pray at home with their children. Pupils attend mass in the parish church which gives the local community the opportunity to see the school as a practicing, worshipping community. The school accepts its responsibility to play a significant part in supporting pupils through the Sacramental Programme. The parish priest visits school often, supports the religious welfare of the staff and pupils and has a good knowledge of where the school is in its journey of faith.

### **THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING**

Witnessing to Christ and the values of the gospel are central to the life of Our Lady's and evident through the behaviour, relationships, learning and work in pupil's books and displays of children's work throughout the school. Pupil members of the chaplaincy team, school council and eco team were found to be most willing to speak about their faith and why it was important to them. The pupils spoke of their pride in being part of a faith community. They are proud of their school and took great delight in explaining why. Some of these pupils provided evidence that they are given the opportunity to influence the strategic decisions of the school. They believe that the management of the school listens to what they have to say and that they can effect change. Pupils are able to recognise the important contribution made to the community by people of other denominations and faiths and understand why this is part of being a Catholic community.

Adults act as role models for the school's mission and values; they promote the ethos of the school to pupils and the wider community. The hard work of the staff enables the pupils to excel spiritually and academically. They engage pupils with the 'big questions' relating to the faith and always answer questions sensitively and compassionately. The school community knows its responsibilities in relation to equal opportunities, reconciliation and Christian stewardship. This understanding is the driving force behind the school's work supporting justice and peace, care for the environment, Christ's love for all, forgiveness and compassion. Many pupils make contributions to the daily life of the school by volunteering to act as monitors in a variety of ways. The school generously supports local, national and international charities such as the Brick Foodbank, Bolton Winter Watch, CAFOD, Caritas, Poppy Appeal and Hospice appeals. Professional collaborations involve the school in work supporting other schools in BOSCEP and the LA.

**AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

Although there are no significant areas to be addressed, the school is encouraged to consider the following:

- Clearly identify the opportunities for the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education in the taught curriculum.
- Prepare the whole school community for the introduction of the new Sex and Relationships scheme.
- Complete the pilot of and fully implement the 'Come and See' religious education scheme.

3<sup>rd</sup> February 2016

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us and for making our visit to Our Lady's such a joyful occasion, we really enjoyed our time with you. You and all the adults in your school work very hard to always do their best and because of this your school is an outstanding Catholic school.

We really enjoyed seeing your lessons and learning about all the wonderful things you do in Our Lady's. We saw as many of you as we could and we are sorry if we didn't see you in your class. Thank you for sharing your work with us, we were impressed by the way you all try to do your best at all times and the beautiful displays around school. It was clear to us that you have a good knowledge and understanding of our Catholic faith.

It was lovely to see so many happy smiling faces. It was obvious you are all very proud of your school and all that you have achieved together. You were all so well behaved, your politeness and manners were simply superb. It was a privilege for us to come into your school.

It was pleasing to see how attentive and confident you were in the acts of collective worship we saw. Everyone showed great respect and reverence, your singing was joyful and your prayers uplifting.

Mr Rushton, all the staff, Fr Kevin, the school governors and your parents are extremely proud of all of you and of what you have achieved, well done, keep it up!

Your teachers are keen to help you develop even further the Catholic life of your school so that together you can continue to 'have life and have it to the full' and to do this they are going to work with you to introduce a new RE scheme and new topics to study.

So, well done and thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Mr John Thorpe and Mrs M Kwiatkowski  
(RE Inspectors)

**Summary Report to Parents**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 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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