

INSPECTION REPORT

Telephone: 0161 817 2204

Email: education@dioceseofsalford.org.uk

**Inspection carried out Under Canon 806
and in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

Name of School **St Mary's RC Primary School, Watt St, Sabden, Clitheroe BB7 9ED**

Inspection date 20th April 2018

Reporting Inspectors Dennis Harrison Patricia Ganley

Type of school	Primary
URN	119651
Age range of pupils	4-11
Number on roll	81
Appropriate authority	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	Michael Mulrooney
Headteacher	Claire Halstead
Religious Education Subject Leader	Jennifer Robinson
Date of previous inspection	September 2011

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

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's RC Primary is a small school situated in the village of Sabden in the Ribble Valley, although many pupils travel from further away. The school serves the parish of Our Lady of the Valley. Although Sabden is an area of relative social advantage, not all the wards that the school serves are advantaged. 11% of pupils are eligible for free school meals and the number of children eligible for Pupil Premium is 18%. There are 76 pupils on roll: currently there are more boys than girls. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average and represents the whole ability range. The school accepts an above average number of pupils with special educational needs and this leads to increased mobility over time and larger classes in the older age groups. 22% of children have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, with 5 children being looked after or previously looked after. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average and represents the whole ability range. There are no pupils with English as a second language. 85% of pupils and 66% of the teaching staff are baptised Roman Catholic.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE: (5 max)

- **The inspirational and pivotal leadership of the headteacher who is well supported and challenged by a passionate, committed governing body and a skilful Religious Education subject leader**
- **The outstanding Catholic life of the school that reaches out to those in need supporting family life in an exemplary manner**
- **The powerful team ethic and shared sense of purpose**
- **The children's positive attitudes, warm welcome and excellent behaviour**

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS GOOD

There is a sense of excitement and purpose at St Mary's RC Primary School, Sabden. This welcoming and friendly school, although small in size, has a big heart! It is an effective Catholic primary school. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, who is highly valued and regarded across the school community, has set the school on a most positive journey and has gained the support of all around her for the school to be 'the best it can be'. It is now ready to declare its mission by defining its unique qualities and strengths. Governors know the school well and support and challenge the headteacher and the team. They share in the direction of the school skilfully. Leaders at all levels are ambitious to see the school succeed at the highest level. St Mary's has a special atmosphere, being warm in welcome, friendly in spirit and certainly full of smiles. The school bears witness to Christ by being the open arms of acceptance to all, irrespective of background, but particularly to those in need. The strong leadership of the Religious Education subject leader has encouraged consistently good teaching with outstanding features. When the best practice is mirrored teaching and learning will be of the highest quality. The prayer life of the school is a strength because the children demonstrate reverence and respect in Worship and are well supported in their faith journeys. Opportunities for a range of prayer opportunities and personal reflection are planned. St Mary's is blessed with wonderful children who love coming to school and behave so well. Parents are overjoyed with all the school offers! As one parent commented, 'if we were to vote, this school would be the best Catholic primary school in the world!'

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership for this effective, small primary school. She has been instrumental in creating a happy and welcoming school. Her approachable nature, profound concern for the well-being of all and her determination and energy to see St Mary's move forward in such a positive way is infectious. She is loved and valued by the children, held in high esteem with parents and highly regarded and respected by the Governing Board. Despite the many

challenges faced in recent years she possesses an upbeat approach to school improvement, reflects honestly on what needs to be done and inspires others on this journey. Support and challenge come in equal measure from a committed and passionate Governing Board. Although some are new to this work, many have served the school for many years. They are particularly skilful in engaging the whole community in important initiatives. Their involvement in day to day school life is impressive and this creates a superb team approach where trust and shared ownership thrive. The parish priest keeps a watchful eye on the school and is a welcome spiritual guide, sharing masses and events with the children. The Religious Education Subject leader takes great pride in her role and provides purposeful leadership in Religious Education, having an accurate evaluation of the school's current provision and a clear direction for further improvement. Underpinning the successes of this small school is the collaborative leadership style that allows every person to contribute in shaping the school's direction and everyday life. Pupil leadership is emerging very well as they take on many roles that enhance their day to day lives.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness) IS OUTSTANDING

The families that attend this popular school feel welcomed and appreciated by the whole school community. They say there is always a friendly face to help with any matter at all. The school has a lovely, family feel creating a sense of belonging that allows everyone to be part of the journey. Relationships are strong and many have established close friendships by being involved in the school, sharing excellent PTA events and the Sacramental Programme. St Mary's is a very inclusive school as is evidenced by the increase in roll in the older classes. They reach out to give a supportive and caring experience to children with SEND or who have needed to be placed in new school for a fresh start. The school has been exceptionally successful in this core purpose of the Church's mission in education, putting the needs of each child at the heart of the school's development. The close relationship with the parish community is a clear strength with parishioners, the parish priest and governors joining together to have a voice in the school's direction and evaluation. The children are cared for very well and are blessed with the knowledge that they are loved and valued. They are given full opportunity to shape the faith life of the school with GIFT chaplaincy and other roles. The children reach out further afield with charitable activities supporting Caritas and St Joseph's Penny amongst others. The school has appropriate provision for SRE. The warmth of relationships across the school bears witness to Christ and all are encouraged to have 'life to the full'. There is tangible evidence that this unfolds in a distinctive way as parents praise the school for the witness that is shown within the community. One parent commented 'we are privileged to have our child in this school because faith is so strong and everyone is so lovely! We travel miles to get here and it is definitely worth the effort!' The school is right to review its mission statement again so that it truly reflects the distinctive qualities that define how far the school has moved forward and its ambitions for an ever brighter future as a wonderful Catholic school in Sabden.

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word) IS GOOD

Overall the quality of Religious Education at St Mary's is good. There is a growing sense of confidence in this area whereby the best teaching is beginning to be modelled. In the best lessons learning is of high quality because the activities planned are enjoyable, fun and thought provoking. There are opportunities for the children to share their views on the matter being discussed and they challenge and question one another about their feelings, thoughts and the Big Questions they want to unpack. In a Key Stage one lesson the children were wanting to share the Good News of the Resurrection and enjoyed drama, shared discussion and planning leading to clever use of technology to inform parents of their joyful news. However in other lessons on occasions teaching was a little safe. The children are ready to take greater steps in shaping their learning and setting themselves very high expectations. This is a next natural step because the children demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning and support each other well. The teachers have a desire to explore further the range of pedagogy. This will open opportunities for even higher expectations, more scope in learning opportunities and greater celebration of increased outcomes. In Key Stage two exceptionally good questioning skills encouraged the children to empathise with the feelings of the disciples as Jesus appeared after the Resurrection. They used Sacred Scripture very well to consider the various accounts of this in the four gospels using highly defined religious literacy. The school fulfils its commitment to give a 10% allocation to Religious Education, especially as many cross curricular aspects are included with Religious Education being at the core of the curriculum. By witnessing and modelling outstanding practice, both at St Mary's and further afield,

consistently outstanding teaching and learning is more than achievable as considerable strengths already exist and the children have an appetite to produce work of the highest quality on a regular basis.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS GOOD

St Mary's is perfectly placed to develop Worship even further because strong foundations for the prayer life of the school are already well defined. The children gather respectfully and sit in the presence of God with reverence, feeling at ease and supportive of one another. In a whole school celebration assembly, attended by many parents and governors, the exceptionally positive relationships and family atmosphere were clearly witnessed. It was a joyful occasion! The children are beginning to plan and deliver prayer and worship and really enjoy taking leading roles. With practice, they can take these roles even further by examining and sharing the breadth of prayer experiences using creative dimensions across the curriculum, for example art, drama, dance and music. Spontaneous prayer and prayer opportunities that involve personal quiet reflection and meditation is beginning to find a place in the day to day prayer life of St Mary's and the children will enjoy being guided in leading this so that it takes place regularly, giving every child moments of stillness as they listen to God and feel His presence in their lives. Across the school children benefit from well-structured times of Worship that all children take a part in. These are always enhanced by the children's beautiful behaviour and a calm prayerful atmosphere. This was particularly evident with younger Key Stage two children who celebrated that 'The Lord is here, the Spirit is with us!' joyfully and respectfully. The 'Thought for the Week' takes prayerful themes into every family home each week helping prayer to be at the centre of family life. Pupil Chaplains facilitate the whole school prayer collections that are shared with the whole school. The school has opened a lovely prayer garden that is perfect for quiet contemplation. Parish, school and class masses all enhance the prayer experience at St Mary's.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- **To improve further the strengths in teaching by witnessing and modelling outstanding practice both at St Mary's and further afield**
- **To deepen and enrich the quality of Worship by developing further the children's role in leading, planning and delivering Worship and extend the breadth of their prayer experience**
- **To consider revisiting the school's mission statement with the school community so that it witnesses the school's unique qualities, ambitions and direction**