



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

St John the Evangelist RC Primary School is a slightly smaller than average primary school serving the parish of St John the Evangelist. Bromley Cross is a semi-rural urban area to the North of Bolton, although the school takes children from a much wider catchment area. The school has grown in size over the last few years and there are currently 200 pupils on roll. There is no nursery provision and therefore children enter the reception class with a variety of pre-school experiences. 70% of pupils are baptised Catholics. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. A broadly average proportion of disadvantaged pupils is supported by the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6. Children enter the school with expected levels of ability, but leave Key Stage 1 slightly above expected. Achievement of pupils in Key Stage 2 is improving. There have been a significant number of changes among teaching staff since the previous inspection. The school has been awarded the Eco Schools silver award and has renewed its Healthy School status. Before and after school care is available on site in the mornings and off site in the evening, through an external provider. Attendance rates are currently 96.4%.

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

St John the Evangelist is a good Catholic primary school with many outstanding features. The school is well led by a committed headteacher, a strong senior leadership team and staff, and an effective governing body. The leadership of the school clearly recognises that Christ is central to all aspects of school life and staff are committed to creating a loving and nurturing learning environment for the children. Teachers are embracing practical and creative approaches to teaching and learning. Pupils have a good knowledge of scripture. Teaching and learning is characterised by high expectations, good progress and creative teaching methods. However, a consistent approach to planning for learning in Religious Education will ensure that religious vocabulary, time for reflection or prayer and differentiation are prioritised. Staff and pupils demonstrate a very high level of care and respect for others. Structures and procedures ensure that all pupils and staff feel safe and happy in school. The quality of welcome is a great strength of St John's and a warm, welcoming and inclusive atmosphere permeates the whole community. Staff are confident at leading prayer and worship. The children's response to prayer has a significant impact upon their treatment of one another, their whole approach to school life and the overall ethos of the school. Staff and pupils are confident and secure in their witness to Christ, the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. Pupils spoke confidently about the importance of being a person of faith and how it impacts on their life. Opportunities for the whole school and parish communities to celebrate together are numerous. Canon Cooke and Father O'Brien are actively involved in school life.

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

- Leadership, including that of governors, has established its own unique vision and climate for improvement, resulting in improved outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils express the Word of God within and beyond the school community. Witness to the values of the Gospel is evident across the school and in RE lessons.
- The enthusiastic leadership from the dedicated religious education subject leaders has led to important improvements in religious education and worship.
- Pastoral care of pupils is a strength. There is a strong family ethos and sense of identity.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is highly developed. As a result, the pupils are able to articulate the impact of their beliefs and values on their lives and learning.

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

The headteacher has led the school well and with a clear determination that the school will continue to improve outcomes for pupils. A strong ethos of mutual support and ambition for the school has moulded staff and governors into a cohesive team who share a vision for Catholic education at St John's. Witness to Gospel values clearly informs decision making. Pupil premium allocation ensures equality of provision for all and vulnerable pupils are recognised as a priority. The leadership from the religious education subject leader has led to important improvements in religious education and the spiritual life of the school. Self-evaluation of the school's work is accurate, although the SEF document could be more evaluative and concise. Teachers are being held to account for progress and standards by the senior leadership team. Improvement objectives for RE are integral to the teacher appraisal process. Staff training is seen as a priority and several staff have attended the Diocesan Kerygma course. The governing body is highly supportive of the school and effectively holds school leaders to account. The chair of governors works closely with the headteacher to ensure all the governors are aware of current strengths and areas for development. Governors effectively evaluate aspects of the school through a variety of monitoring procedures including 'keep in touch' meetings. They have guided the school through some challenging times. They have a clear vision for the future and a Religious Ethos Plan. Religious education and the spiritual life of the school are prioritised in the school improvement plan and headteacher reports to governors. Astute appointments to the teaching staff, high-quality training in subject knowledge and leadership skills, and honest feedback on their work have established a strong teaching team. The appointment of a new headteacher, following the retirement of Mr Carroll at the end of December 2015, will be the next challenge for the governing body. The deputy headteacher has been appointed acting headteacher for two terms.

### **THE QUALITY OF WORD IS GOOD**

The quality of teaching in religious education is good, with some outstanding features. Pupils have good knowledge of scripture and a positive attitude to learning. The requirements of the religious education curriculum are being fully met and the school uses 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' and 'Come and See' to support their teaching of RE. Pupils are highly aware of and fully confident in witnessing to the beliefs and values of the Catholic community, because this aspect is taught effectively in lessons. Relationships are good and pupils are confident when talking about God and their faith. Pupils are keen to learn more; they achieve well, enjoy and are challenged by their learning in RE. Teaching and learning is characterised by high expectations, good progress and creative teaching methods. However, a consistent approach to planning for religious education will ensure that religious vocabulary, time for reflection and differentiation are prioritised. Teachers ask skilful questions to check what pupils can do and also prompt them to explain their thinking. World faiths are taught in RE lessons, through the wider curriculum and assemblies. Marking is having a positive impact on learning, but this could be further improved. Teaching Assistants are highly effective in their interactions with pupils. The religious education budget is set according to the needs of the curriculum and the Catholic life of the school and is adjusted on a yearly basis in line with other core subjects. The school prioritises religious education on their professional development programme. Team teaching opportunities are promoted, as are peer assessment moderation activities within school and with other schools.

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

The quality of welcome is a strength of St John's; a warm and inclusive atmosphere permeates the whole school. Inspectors were warmly welcomed by the school caretaker at the start of the day and the culture of welcome was extended by all members of the community. The school demonstrated their understanding of welcome in a variety of contexts and the staff are living examples of the school mission statement. A calm, caring atmosphere pervades the school. Parents and pupils were extremely complimentary about standards of behaviour, the learning environment and friendly community spirit. Parents fully appreciate all that has been undertaken over the last few years to improve the school at every level and Mr Carroll was singled out for praise. The school council, chaplaincy team, eco team and other pupil groups promote a sense of

responsibility. They are involved in conducting tours for visitors and sharing their views. The 'seeds and gardeners' scheme was praised by parents. Younger pupils are welcomed and supported by those in Year 6 throughout their first year in school. Parents are particularly appreciative of the family assemblies, rewards systems, induction activities and the welcome they receive from staff in the morning, reinforcing a sense of belonging to the school. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in school life and they feel a strong sense of 'family'. Caring for the individual is strongly manifested through policies and ethos. The needs of vulnerable pupils are catered for extremely well and the social worker plays a vital role in this respect. The school works in partnership with other Catholic primary schools within Bolton and has established strong links with the Catholic high school. The school communicates effectively with parents.

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

Parents spoke highly of the pastoral support their child receives in school. Staff and pupils demonstrate a very high level of care and respect for others. Structures and procedures ensure that all pupils and staff feel safe and happy in school. The school employs a social worker four hours per week to support pastoral activities. She was extremely complimentary about the high level of support that children receive at St John's. Provision for safeguarding and keeping children safe is outstanding. Bullying incidents are very rare and when they do occur, they are treated in accordance with the behaviour policy. Parents concerns are dealt with effectively. The 'peacemakers' initiative in Year 6 promotes positive behaviour at playtime and they act as role models for younger children. Pupils are confident that if they have any problems they can speak to a member of staff and that any problems will be dealt with sympathetically. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is outstanding. Staff and governors have undertaken training with regards to the Rainbows programme for those children suffering loss or bereavement. The school delivers two comprehensive sex and relationship programmes; 'A Journey in Love' aimed at Reception to Y4 and 'All That I Am' in Year 5 and 6, which celebrates sexuality and our responsibility therein as a gift from God. Pupils and staff are empowered to express their opinions and know that these will be heard and responded to with respect. Pupil voice is seen as an essential part of decision making. All in the community genuinely care for each other.

### **THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS GOOD**

Prayer is at the heart of the school community and pupils are provided with a range of opportunities to develop and enrich their prayer life. The RE subject leader has been instrumental in developing the prayer life of the school. There is a prayer core at the heart of the school. There are regular celebrations of the Mass to which parents and parishioners are invited and these are well attended. In preparation for the Mass, pupils study the meaning of the Word. Monday's acts of worship are led by teachers and pupils from a different class each week. These assemblies are linked to 'statements to live by' and therefore provide an opportunity to give glory, honour, praise and thanks to God. During the inspection, the Year 4 class led a thoughtful and creative act of worship on the theme of 'peace'. The inspector was extremely impressed by the way all children and adults participated in prayer and the singing of hymns. It was a truly uplifting and joyful experience. Teachers are confident at leading classroom prayer and worship. During the inspection, the teacher created the right climate for prayer and the children were leading aspects, but greater time could have been devoted to silent, meditative prayer; plus encouraging the pupils to pray spontaneously. The school chaplaincy team is leading new initiatives to enhance the spiritual life of the school. Prayer areas in classrooms, display materials and artefacts demonstrate creativity and relevance to the children. Each year a pupil in the school receives an award for spiritual development. Parents are extremely happy with the sacramental programme and level of support they receive from the school. The Wednesday Word is sent home on a weekly basis to support collective worship and liturgy. The school has forged strong links with the parish and the engagement of families in parish activities and worship is strong. Alongside the senior leadership team, governors have been involved in monitoring prayer and worship through learning walks and meetings with pupils.

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

St John the Evangelist encourages and supports its pupils to develop a relationship with God and to share their beliefs with others through words and actions. The school encourages and supports its pupils to be proactive citizens who contribute to the decision-making process. A strong sense of belonging to the school community exists. Relationships are excellent between all members of the community. Observations showed that children treated each other with respect, care, patience, concern, with dignity and there is an emphasis on creating a pleasant working environment for everyone in school. The pupils are keen supporters of local and international charities including: Cafod, Bolton Homeless Outreach, Defibs 4 school, Red Nose day, Children in Need, Rotary Club shoe box appeal and taking Christmas presents to children in Bolton hospital. Much of this fundraising is child initiated. Links with the parish and the local community are excellent. The headteacher ensures that all staff receive training on 'working in a Catholic school' and he is a role model for the school's mission statement and values. The religious education subject leader encourages staff to make links within the community and with other schools in order to further develop a witnessing community. The introduction of pupil to the chaplaincy team has enhanced pupil responsibility: nurturing, supporting and challenging pupils to live out and give witness to their faith. The eco group and peacemakers work hard to be agents of change and of social transformation at the service of the common good, as builders of the Kingdom of God. The school has a designated prayer area where the peacemakers and pupil members of the chaplaincy team lead small groups of younger pupils in prayer. The most impressive aspect of the school's work with regards to witness was demonstrated in RE lessons. Teachers actively promote witness to the faith in lessons, assemblies, prayer and worship. Witness to the values of the Gospel is evident across the school.

### **AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:**

- To develop a consistent approach to planning for learning in Religious Education. Ensure that religious vocabulary, time for reflection and differentiation are evident in the planning of lessons.
- To further develop the school's approach to assessment. Make sure that the system for feeding back to pupils in religious education is consistent in all classes, so pupils gain a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve.
- To provide greater opportunities for children to be involved in silent, meditative and spontaneous prayers.

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015

Dear Pupils

Thank you so much for the wonderful welcome you gave us when we came to visit you. We really enjoyed learning about all the wonderful things you do at St John the Evangelist. You and your teachers are working hard to always do your very best and as a result your RE work is good. We were particularly impressed by the way you look after each other and the way you share your faith with others. The prayers corners and RE displays are beautiful.

It was wonderful to see how you participated in the assembly. Your behaviour was exemplary, readers read well and your singing was beautiful. Mr Harrison thought collective worship in Year 1 was very special. We are really pleased that you have 'seeds and gardeners' 'peacemakers' and a school chaplaincy team to help you in school. We have asked your teachers to continue to develop prayer and worship by encouraging you to pray in silence and talk to God using your own words.

Your teachers are keen to help you to make even greater progress in RE and to do this they are going to improve the feedback they give you in lessons. They are also going to make some changes to the way they plan activities.

God bless you all and enjoy Christmas.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Susan Gedzielewski and Mr Damian Harrison  
(Section 48 Inspectors)

## Summary Report to Parents

On 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015 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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