

INSPECTION REPORT

Our Lady and St. Gerard's Catholic Primary School, Lourdes Avenue, Lostock Hall, Preston PR5 5TB

Inspection date 21st March 2017

Reporting Inspector Mrs A Heard
 Mr A Sowerby

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

Type of School Voluntary Aided Primary School
 URN 119639
 Age range of pupils 3-11
 Number on roll 343
 Appropriate authority The Governing Body
 Chair of Governors Mr Kevin Lyth
 Headteacher Mrs Jackie McNally
 Religious Education Subject Leader Mrs Louise Stacey
 Date of previous inspection May 2012

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

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

Our Lady and St Gerard's school is a larger than average voluntary-aided primary school serving the parish of St Gerard's, Lostock Hall, Preston. There are 343 children currently on roll and these numbers continue to grow. 66% of children attending the school are baptised Catholic children. There are a small proportion of children (9) who have English as an additional language. 31 children are currently on the SEND register. There are 49 children who are eligible for pupil premium funding. 80% of the teachers are baptised Catholics, as are 80% of the teaching assistants. Five teachers are currently undertaking the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS). Many staff members attend Mass regularly at the parish church, as well as attending at the Sacramental celebrations.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING

Our Lady and St Gerard's is an outstanding school where all within its community feel valued and supported. The outstanding leaders have created a strong team who have a united desire to provide an excellent and rich learning environment built on gospel values. The mission statement of the school – 'Placing God in our hearts, we will love, live and learn' - is clearly witnessed in all aspects of school life. The children are proud of their school, they care for the environment and are well behaved and enthusiastic. Staff ensure a consistent approach permeates all areas of the curriculum and expectations of behaviour are very high. This ensures children feel cared for, safe and supported whilst at school. The children are provided with a rich and creative faith experience which allows them to grow closer to God. High expectations and a desire to be even better, results in children and staff working collaboratively to raise standards. Targeted differentiation is used effectively to meet the needs of all pupils. The governing body are well informed and have a detailed and accurate picture of the school. They hold the senior leadership team to account and have high aspirations for all. There is a strong partnership between the school and parish, and the parish priest is a regular visitor to the school. The school have worked very hard to develop positive partnerships with parents and to this end they have introduced numerous initiatives to ensure parents are well informed about what is happening in school.

KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The aspirational, strong and hard-working senior leadership team
- The well informed and proactive governing body, especially the parish priest
- The enthusiastic, well behaved and hard-working children
- The care, guidance and support for pupils and their families
- The outstanding teamwork which ensures that the needs of all members of the school community are central to its ethos

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The senior leadership team is a strong and effective partnership. The dedicated headteacher provides a clear vision and purpose for this Catholic school. In collaboration with the other school leaders they demonstrate a shared commitment to providing the best education and opportunities for all. The headteacher is currently seconded to support another school and it is to everyone's credit that whilst she offers this support and guidance the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher continue to drive up standards and expectations at Our Lady and St Gerard's. Parents feel that staff at all levels go the extra mile to support their children. They commented that staff are very aware of the individual needs of pupils and are sensitive and caring. The governors are highly skilled and are regular visitors to the school. They are fully supportive of and promote the Catholic ethos of the school. They carry out learning walks, classroom observations and report back regularly to the governing body with their findings. The Religious Education (RE) subject leader and RE governor have an effective working relationship and this has been significant in the development of religious

education and the spiritual life of the school. All members of the school community are united in promoting the children's voice as an essential part of decision making. The GIFT team, school council, digital leaders and eco group are examples of how children are encouraged to develop a sense of leadership and witness to the gospel values.

THE QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS OUTSTANDING

The Word of God is known and witnessed to at Our Lady and St Gerard's school. The adoption of the 'Come and See' programme and training for its implementation has provided a deeper understanding of the importance and relevance of the teachings of Jesus Christ. Five members of the teaching staff are currently enrolled on the CCRS programme provided by Salford Diocese. Their commitment to this has resulted in them feeling more confident in their teaching of religious education and the spiritual development of the pupils. All lessons of religious education observed on the day of the inspection were at least good if not better. Teachers are skilled in providing well planned and structured lessons which promote creativity and discussion. The 'big questions' are encouraged and are used effectively to promote challenge and deeper thinking. Behaviour for learning is outstanding. Walls around the school display passages from the Bible. Children are knowledgeable about the Bible and older children can use them confidently. The children are familiar with The Beatitudes and are able to adapt them to meet the needs of today's society. Religious education is truly at the core of everything that happens within the school. Parents commented on how the Catholic ethos 'underlines the whole life of the school' and that 'the Catholic faith was deeply embedded in the children'. Pupils talked positively about religious education and take pride in their written work. High expectations ensure that the quality of work in workbooks is equal to that of the children's literacy books. Standards are monitored regularly by the religious education subject leader and the senior leaders.

THE QUALITY OF THE WELCOME IS OUTSTANDING

Visitors to the school are welcomed with a special greeting card: 'When you Enter this Loving school Consider yourself One of the special Members of an Extraordinary family.' This statement is lived out in all that happens at Our Lady and St Gerard's. Relationships between staff, pupils, parents and the wider community are very strong. Parents feel very supported by the school. They talk about the good relationships they have with staff, who were described as very approachable. The school is a very calm and caring environment where all are valued for their uniqueness and knowledge they are formed in God's image. The school provides exceptional care, guidance and support for pupils and their families. The school is a happy school where adults and pupils live out their lives as role models to each other. Children are taught a sense of responsibility to follow the teachings of Christ. The GIFT team along with the school council and eco council give voice to their peer's ideas and concerns. They feel listened to and supported. Children are encouraged to develop their sense of individuality and to celebrate their differences. Communication is very effective in delivering the school's ethos and mission to parents. A parent with a child in early years spoke very positively about 'Tapestry', an ICT Link where parents and staff can communicate through pictures and text about the experiences of the children. Another parent spoke about the Sacramental Programme and how parents were more involved.

THE QUALITY OF WELFARE IS OUTSTANDING

The welfare of all is paramount to everyone at Our Lady's and St Gerard's. Staff go the extra mile to ensure that children's and family's needs are addressed in a supportive and caring manner. Staff are sensitive in their approach and share a genuine belief in the gospel values of caring for one another. The school supports many charitable organisations and at the time of the inspection were fundraising for CAFOD's Little Fish into Big Fish project. The children spoke confidently about how they are involved in the decision making of which charities to support; these have included the homeless and less fortunate. Relationships are excellent, children show respect for themselves and for others. If they have any concerns they know where to turn and who to talk to. Arguments and disagreements are dealt with quickly and fairly. The Gift team play an active role in the pastoral welfare of others. This was witnessed on the day of the inspection when one of the GIFT team spoke compassionately with a younger child whose uncle had died. Further to this, playground buddies and digital leaders take responsibility for the care and support of their peers in promoting a safe and happy

environment in and out of school. Staff welfare is a priority. The headteacher has made the staffroom a relaxing and calming area. There is a clear sense of a shared goal in how positive relationships exist between staff. Parents feel very supported, and in times of difficulties the school has been a welcome support, often guiding them through difficult and traumatic experiences.

THE QUALITY OF WITNESS IS OUTSTANDING

The staff act as role models in celebrating their faith by attending Mass at the parish Church on a regular basis. They speak confidently about their discipleship and are active in promoting gospel values. The school is proactive in appointing Catholic teachers and currently there are five undertaking the CCRS course. The headteacher is a Section 48 inspector and is supporting another Catholic school for four days a week. Strong links with other primary and secondary schools are fostered in order to celebrate their witnessing faith. The GIFT team have links with the two Catholic high schools which provides continuity and support when the children move on to their secondary education. There have been several groups established at the school to encourage children to be actively involved in decision making. The GIFT team, school council, eco council and digital leaders are all active in following Christ's teachings. They have strong core values and are able to witness to these through their actions. Throughout the school examples were witnessed in and out of the classrooms where children and staff live out the gospel values in their day-to-day interactions. The school positively supports those who are less fortunate and vulnerable in our society. Children are taught from a very early age that they should live by the social and moral values that Christ exemplified whilst on earth and that each one of us has a responsibility to follow in his footsteps. Challenges and big questions are used to develop the whole school community's response to God's calling. Children are taught to be confident citizens who are able to act justly and fairly showing compassion and forgiveness. Fundraising initiated by the children is a strength of this school.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

Worship in all its forms is an integral part of daily life at Our Lady and St Gerard's school. From the earliest years children are taught to pray both individually and in acts of collective worship. The children show great reverence and respect during prayer. The peace within the sessions witnessed on the day clearly demonstrated how children and staff have built a strong spiritual relationship with God. The recently developed Chapel is clearly an area of peace and tranquillity. Children show great respect on entering this area and it has a purposeful and prayerful quality. During Lent a cross has been left on display covered in plasters with people's names on them who need healing. Children are actively encouraged to think and pray for these people. The school's mission statement is central to prayer and worship; it is included in all policies and is known by all within the school community. Children actively take part in the celebration of Holy Mass and are encouraged to be readers. They engage in dramatic representations of the Scriptures during acts of collective worship. Throughout the inspection day the inspectors were very impressed with how staff use creative and imaginative ways to enhance children's prayer life and spirituality. Parents spoke about how their children engaged in self-initiated prayer at home. They were very pleased at how the school encourages children to develop their spirituality and relationship with God. Staff are very confident and skilful (even those who are not Catholics) in developing the children's prayer life. Targeted training has been put in place to ensure that all members of staff are supported in developing their own faith life and spirituality. A whole school weekly assembly is used to reflect on the previous Sunday's Gospel and this is further developed in classrooms, so that children can develop their knowledge and understanding of Holy Scripture. Families are actively encouraged to be part of this prayerful community. Class Masses and the monthly family Mass in the parish Church encourages parents and children to respond to God's calling. The Sacramental Programme reflects the strong bonds between parents, parish and the community. Parishioners pray for the children on their Sacramental journey. The dedication of the parish priest to the school is exceptional and he is very active in developing the children's, their families and parishioner's relationship with God. During the season of Lent, Lenten crosses are sent home with a guide to praying together at home. This is a true example of a very prayerful community.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- To enhance the profile of the GIFT team in order to support the development of child-initiated acts of collective worship across the school
- To continue to embed the recently adopted RE curriculum 'Come and See' and its associated assessment for learning

Date 28th March 2017

Dear Pupils

Thank you so much for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school for the bishop a few weeks ago. You made us feel very welcome with your happy smiling faces. Mrs Heard and Mr Sowerby really enjoyed learning about all the great things that you do at Our Lady and St. Gerard's. Your mission statement is clearly lived by everyone at your school.

We know from talking to you and watching you that you are very proud of your school and take great care of it and each other. We really enjoyed listening to you talk about your new Chapel and the many fundraising events you are involved in. Continue to look after each other and help those in need just like Pope Francis asked us to do.

You will be happy to know that we think you have an outstanding school. You work very hard to be the best you can. We enjoyed being part of your lessons. Your teachers work very hard to give you exciting and challenging lessons and we would like to say thank you to them and all who help them in making your school so special.

Your headteacher, with the support of the other school leaders and governors, has worked hard to make your school a safe and happy place for everybody. You are very lucky to have so many people who work so hard to give you the best education they can.

Your beautiful singing and your participation in the acts of collective worship show that you enjoy living in Jesus.

We have asked your teachers to continue to help you in developing your knowledge through the 'Come and See' RE curriculum. We have also asked them to help the GIFT team have more opportunities to develop pupil lead worship throughout the school.

God bless you all,

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Heard
Mr Sowerby

(Section 48 Inspectors)

Summary Report to Parents

On 21st March 2017 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.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS

Our Lady and St Gerard's is an outstanding school where all within its community feel valued and supported. The outstanding leaders have created a strong team who have a united desire to provide an excellent and rich learning environment built on Gospel values. The mission statement of the school – 'placing God in our hearts, we will love, live and learn' - is clearly witnessed in all aspects of school life. The children are proud of their school, they care for the environment and are well behaved and enthusiastic. Staff ensure a consistent approach permeates all areas of the curriculum and expectations of behaviour are very high. This ensures children feel cared for, safe and supported whilst at school. The children are provided with a rich and creative faith experience which allows them to grow closer to God. High expectations and a desire to be even better, results in children and staff working collaboratively to raise standards. Targeted differentiation is used effectively to meet the needs of all pupils. The governing body are well informed and have a detailed and accurate picture of the school. They hold the senior leadership team to account and have high aspirations for all. There is a strong partnership between the school and parish, and the parish priest is a regular visitor to the school. The school have worked very hard to develop positive partnerships with parents and to this end they have introduced numerous initiatives to ensure parents are well informed about what is happening in school.

KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- The aspirational strong and hard-working senior management team
- The well informed and proactive governing body, especially the parish priest
- The enthusiastic, well behaved and hard-working children
- The care, guidance and support for pupils and their families
- The outstanding teamwork which ensures that the needs of all members of the school community are central to its ethos

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT:

- To enhance the profile of the GIFT team in order to support the development of child-initiated acts of collective worship across the school
- To continue to embed the recently adopted RE curriculum 'Come and See' and it's associated assessment for learning