

INSPECTION REPORT

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

Name of School: **St Veronica's RC Primary School, Raven Avenue, Rossendale, BB4 4EZ**

Inspection date 1st April 2019

Reporting Inspectors Donna Kiernan, Martin Johnson

Type of school	Primary
URN	105220
Age range of pupils	4 – 11
Number on roll	177
Appropriate authority	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	Fiona McIntyre
Headteacher	Nicola White
Religious Education Subject Leader	Carl Barnacle
Date of previous inspection	18 th March 2014

The Inspection judgements are:	Grade	Explanation of the Grades
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	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)	1	
The quality of Worship	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

St Veronica's RC Primary School is a smaller than average sized primary school on a housing estate in Helmsore and serves the parish of St Marie's. Around 41% of the children come from families whose socio-economic circumstances are more advantaged as measured by the Indices of Deprivation. 19% come from areas of higher social deprivation. Approximately 12% of children are of minority ethnic heritage, mainly from Eastern Europe with many for whom English is an additional language. 4.5% of children are eligible for Free School Meals and 12.5% are eligible for Pupil Premium Funding. 9.7% have been identified as having a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND) which is in line with the national average, with 3 pupils having Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The parish church of St Veronica's closed recently and school masses and religious services are celebrated regularly in the school hall and in St Edmund Arrowsmith Chapel. 100% of the teachers and 63% of the children are baptised Catholics. When children leave, they are above the national average in all subjects. The Religious Education subject leader is new to the post since September 2018. Since the last inspection, a new chair, vice-chair of governors and Parish Priest have taken up office.

THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:

- **The religious literacy of pupils across the school which is of a high standard**
- **The care for pupils – inclusion is given the highest priority**
- **Parental engagement with the Catholic life of the school**
- **Children's engagement with the 'Big Questions' further deepens their religious knowledge**

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING

St Veronica's RC Primary School is an outstanding Catholic school. It is an extremely inclusive school where the needs of the most vulnerable are met with dignity and love and each person within the community is treated as a unique child of God and deserving only of the very best. The school is driven by its mission which ensures that all are welcome in Jesus' name. The headteacher is passionate about Catholic education and provides outstanding leadership. She is very well supported by a strong senior leadership team, very talented staff and extremely dedicated and committed governors who provide high quality support and challenge and are ambitious for the school's continuing improvement. As a result, children are enthusiastic about their work in Religious Education (RE) and standards of religious literacy are very high. Parents are exceptionally supportive of the school. They talk about always being made to feel welcome, the nurturing Catholic ethos and the school being pivotal in their children's faith journeys and spiritual development. Children's behaviour in classes and around school is exemplary and they treat each other with respect and dignity. They are proud of their school and feel safe and nurtured. Adults are excellent Christ-centred role models for the children and therefore relationships are good across the school. The parish priest has ensured that he visits the school on a weekly basis and monitors progress in RE and Catholic life of the school. The school should now further develop the excellent work and leadership skills of the pupil chaplains in leading whole school and key stage worship.

THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

The strong and authentic leadership of the headteacher together with her newly formed leadership team has ensured that the mission is driven with energy and inspiration and has created a whole school culture of calm, security and nurture at St Veronica's. She, along with her talented and committed staff, demonstrate deep commitment and care for the pupils and are passionate about providing them with the best possible Catholic education. The governing board have undergone change during recent years but have been steadfast in their support and challenge. Led by the new Chair and the Parish Priest, they demonstrate a deep commitment to the school and to the Church's mission in education. The obvious ambition for the very

best for all within a shared mission is driven by all leaders across the school. Gospel values are at the heart of decisions made in the school and resources are well targeted to support those in greatest need. The SENDCo referenced several examples of resources being effectively targeted to support pupils who were vulnerable and the support offered to SEND pupils was highly praised by parents who stated that they 'couldn't see how any more could have been done' for their children. Priority is given to the development of the whole child through their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The parish priest supports the school well and, as RE governor, works with staff to monitor standards and ensure that the Catholic life of the school is of the highest priority. Under the leadership of the headteacher, senior leaders and governors, the school has managed the impact of the closure of the church of St Veronica's very well and the use of St Edmund Arrowsmith Chapel has ensured that the school remains a joint focal point, along with the neighbouring school of St Mary's.

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

The culture of welcome that exists at St Veronica's permeates all aspects of school life and all within and beyond the school community feel valued and 'greeted as Christ Himself'. All children are given dignity and are treated as unique children of God and their holistic development is given the highest priority. Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities are given high quality support. A strong family ethos exists across the school enabling a real sense of belonging. One parent commented, 'This is more than a school, it's a family'. Parents are very supportive of the work of the school and were keen to tell inspectors that staff were approachable, always willing to listen and any issues that arose were dealt with quickly and effectively. They felt that the nurturing Catholic nature of the school provides their children with real support on their faith journey, especially during the recent times of church closure and parish merging. Advent and Lenten home prayer packs clearly demonstrated the high level of parental/school liaison in the children's spiritual growth. The school has very effective procedures to keep children safe. Staff are role models of Christian living and pupils' interactions with each other demonstrate gospel values. They are able to relate how and why their relationships are reflective of their own mission statement and how they can be servants to each other. This is demonstrated through the 'buddying' system, prayer partners, mentors and the work of the very active members of the chaplaincy team who take a lead in planning class worship across the school and are involved in the planning and delivery of the Diocesan GIFT Team celebration event. Children's behaviour is exemplary and all are treated with respect and dignity creating a genuine Christ-centred climate across the school. Children and parents are actively involved in raising money for a wide range of charities. A high level of stewardship exists in the school, as exemplified by the sponsorship of a child through the One World project, outreach work in the local community alongside working with community and parish partners to ensure that all have a sense of belonging.

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word) IS OUTSTANDING

The school's Mission Statement, which was written by the children, staff and governors, is known, clearly lived out and regularly used as a reference point by staff and children alike. RE is given a high priority in the curriculum and meets the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory through the use of the *Come and See* and *Caritas in Action* schemes. Children enjoy their learning in RE stating that, 'RE lessons are fun' and inspectors saw well-crafted lessons where children were able to articulate their deep religious knowledge and skills. Teachers used excellent questioning techniques to extend children's learning about scripture. This ensured a deep understanding of the impact that Sacred Scripture has on the children's daily lives and children were able to discuss this with inspectors. Big questions and 'I wonder...' walls are a major part of the children's learning, encouraging deeper religious thinking. Children are proud of their learning in RE and were keen to share this. The content of the work in RE books was of a high standard. The school should now focus on allowing for more writing opportunities in extended pieces for the older children to enable them to demonstrate their higher order thinking. Children's behaviour for learning in RE is exemplary. The environment across the school is beautiful with high quality displays reflecting the value that the school places on learning across the curriculum and particularly in RE. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education ensures that the children develop as responsible, caring and loving members of God's family. British values are linked to Gospel values. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is well delivered through the '*In the Beginning*' and the PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) scheme. Children learn about other faiths both within the '*Come and See*' scheme and through the very successful 'Learning weeks'. To ensure that staff are best supported in their delivery of RE, staff professional development to support the '*Come and See*' scheme and assessment are given the highest priority and have enabled staff to feel confident in their support of the pupils. The school is an active member of the Valley Schools Catholic Cluster, working with other Catholic schools to share practice in RE teaching and learning.

THE QUALITY OF WORSHIP IS OUTSTANDING

Prayer is at the core of the school community at St Veronica's and children are reflective, meditative and respond with reverence and dignity to prayer opportunities. Parents praise the prayer life of the school and how it has had an impact on their children's spiritual development. Pupils take an active role in leading worship within their own classes and this should now be further developed to include the whole school Gospel assemblies. The very active pupil chaplaincy group, led by a very dynamic and pro-active adult leader, has co-ordinated a visit to a local care home where they have shared gifts made by the children. They also, having met and planned with the Parish Priest, take a lead in religious services; the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday being one example of this. The school supports staff very well in developing their confidence in leading prayer and worship offering both in-house and external support through training. This is evident in the training that has been offered to support leading worship across the school and by the number of staff that each year attend the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies, Catholic Leadership Programme and Catholic Middle Leadership Programme training offered by the Diocese. The adult leader of pupil chaplaincy has also attended all relevant training. The 'Big questions' that children pose are linked into prayer and worship sessions both in class and in key stage assemblies. The Prayer Garden, which was set up in memory of a pupil, is well used by classes and groups for prayer and reflection. Prayer focal points around the school offer further opportunities for quiet prayer and meditation. The school prioritises developing and sustaining effective home, school, parish links through prayer projects during Advent and Lent which are well contributed to by parents and through distribution of the Gospel through the 'Wednesday Word'. Worship across the school is well resourced. The adjacent Chapel of St Edmund Arrowsmith is well used by the school for prayer and quiet reflection and, although parents regret the closure of the church, they speak highly of the work the school has done since to ensure it is very much at the centre of the worshipping life of the local parish community.

AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- **To further develop the role of the pupils in planning, preparing and leading all acts of collective worship**
- **To provide the older children with more extended writing opportunities in order for them to fully demonstrate their high level of religious literacy**