



## Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 140803

Carried out on behalf of the **Most Rev. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham** on:

Date: 4-5 May 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b> The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	<b>1</b>
<b>Catholic life and mission (p.3)</b> How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.....	1
<b>Religious education (p.5)</b> The quality of curriculum religious education.....	1
<b>Collective worship (p.7)</b> The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....	1
The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

### Summary of key findings

#### What the school does well

- Catholic life and mission are celebrated at St Mary's Catholic Primary School, actively lived out by the entire community, enabling pupils to grow and learn in a faith-filled atmosphere.
- All staff, including leaders, are exemplary role models and have a loving and nurturing approach. Consequently, pupils are happy and confident, feeling safe in their school environment, providing an inspirational witness to the teachings of Jesus.
- Pupil leaders demonstrate a deep-rooted sense of belief and stewardship in their role, actively leading and contributing to the chaplaincy opportunities available.

- Teaching across the school is excellent because teachers have secure subject knowledge and effectively consolidate pupils' prior learning. As a result, the quality of pupils' work is of a very high standard.
- Leaders are inspirational in ensuring that the highest priority is given to the professional development of all staff, resulting in prayer and liturgy being central to school life.

#### What the school needs to improve:

- Review the prayer and liturgy policy to ensure that clear expectations for building up the skills of participation for each year group are defined, ensuring progression throughout the school.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to select a suitable personal level of challenge in religious education lessons.
- Grow and embed a flourishing partnership between the school and parish.

## Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school .....

1

### Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school .....

1

### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school .....

1

Pupils clearly understand and express eloquently the school's Catholic life and mission, 'Learning to live out our calling with compassion and love,' which is rooted, embedded, and actively lived out throughout the school. Through the various pupil-led leadership groups in school, the local and national community is supported by prayer, fundraising activities, and care for our common home. Pupils are proactive in leading peace marches, collecting clothes and raising funds for those in need. The curriculum is steeped in catholicity, with Catholic Social Teaching being a strength; Catholic life pledges are interwoven throughout the curriculum. Everyone is welcome in this school with Christ at the centre, and the language of love and support for others is at its foundation's core. Everyone contributes to this joyful community and actively witnesses their faith through daily interactions with others, enabling pupils to grow and learn in a faith-filled atmosphere. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary in lessons and throughout the school, with the utmost care given to all; the Guardian Angel's mission is to look out for everyone, ensuring that no child is left out. The pupil leaders feel the school values their roles; for example, pupils know they are a child of God; it is part of their DNA.

Christ is at the heart of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, building strong and quality relationships and securing a culture of welcome, 'a real family, where all of the community are respected.' The school reflects its Catholic character by celebrating pupils' work, and vibrant displays offer opportunities to develop formation. Because of this, each classroom has displays and prayer prompts reflecting the times and seasons of the liturgical calendar. All staff are exemplary role models, including leaders, and have a loving and nurturing approach. Consequently, pupils are happy and confident, feeling safe in their school environment, providing an inspirational witness to the teachings of Jesus. Chaplaincy provision is central to all aspects of school, and every community member is supported in their vocational journey. There is a strong sense of community, and pupils are committed to responding to and helping those in need. The provision for relationships, sex, and

health education (RSHE) is carefully planned, and the pupils talk confidently about their learning and its application to their lives.

Leaders and governors are inspirational in promoting the school's mission. They are deeply committed and passionate and constantly support everyone. The school seeks to work well with the local parish and show a commitment to its mission. Leaders recognise that there is work to do to grow and embed a flourishing partnership between the school and the parish. The 'prayer partners' link with the parish and school is a wonderful example where pupils pray for parish members each term. The school promotes parental engagement; they are highly supportive of developing their child's vocation. One parent commented, 'The school's ethos supports and reflects the Catholic faith. Christ is at the centre of everything that they do.' Staff speak highly of the care and love that leaders demonstrate and told inspectors, 'Our school promotes a love of faith which is engaging and inspiring for all our children. Our Catholic ethos is intrinsic in all that we say and do.' There is an open-door well-being policy, and staff feel confident they can readily access support. One staff commented, 'St Mary's is a wonderful place where strong relationships are formed, and everyone is respected.' Governors make highly significant contributions, effectively evaluating with rigour, analysis, and targeted improvement.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....	1
<b>Pupil outcomes</b> How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....	1
<b>Provision</b> The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....	1
<b>Leadership</b> How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....	1



Pupils have excellent knowledge, understanding and skills and are exceptionally eloquent in religious education. Pupils are highly confident and make good progress in knowing more and remembering more. They can relate their understanding of Scripture to everyday life. Pupils are confident and have a desire for deeper learning. Pupils can speak confidently about their learning in religious education, showing awareness of key concepts and vocabulary. They concentrate exceptionally well; they love the challenge of learning and are interested, reflective learners. Pupils are engaged in lessons and are willing to improve their knowledge to develop spiritually. They produce a very high standard of work, presented in a wide variety and creative ways between classrooms. Behaviour in all lessons is outstanding. Feedback tells pupils how well they are doing and what they need to improve; subsequently, pupils are confident in articulating how they make progress in religious education. Attainment is high and comparable with other subjects.

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and have high expectations for their pupils. Planning is consistent and is linked to prior attainment and assessments. All lessons share the same approach to teaching, with teachers following school policy. Teachers confidently use higher-order questioning throughout lessons, developing pupils' recall of prior learning. The 'get us thinking' lesson starter technique is used highly effectively and well-matched to the purpose of the lessons. Teachers use paired talk regularly, with short activities spaced throughout to ensure the pace of lessons is always brisk. All pupils are engaged in their religious education lessons, maximising learning time. However, on occasion, some lessons are too teacher-led, leaving less time for pupils' independence and creativity. In most lessons, support staff are used effectively to support learning; however, where support staff remain static in the classroom, their contribution to learning is ineffective. Teachers offer challenges through carefully planned questions, enabling pupils to make excellent progress; however, pupils want more opportunities to choose a suitable level of personal

challenge. The use of the Bible in lessons is a strength of the school. Whilst pupils are confident about their learning and can talk about what they have learnt, they are not always sure of the purpose or focus of lesson content.

Leaders and governors ensure that provision meets the requirements of the bishops. Religious education has full parity with other core curriculum subjects and is resourced efficiently; curriculum time is appropriately allocated in every classroom. The school has invested heavily in resourcing and effective staff training, increasing staff confidence in teaching religious education. This increases confidence in staff members, especially those not Catholic, who welcome support through an open-door policy. Training is planned well, regular and of high quality. This is a strength of the school and supports the development of subject knowledge and pedagogy. The school shares its outstanding training to help develop other schools in the collegiate regarding lesson design and feedback. The highly skilled subject leaders are inspirational and driven to constantly improve standards throughout the school to get the best for every pupil. They have a clear, coherent vision and know their next steps through effective action plans. They plan carefully and support other staff members through planning surgeries and coaching models. The head teacher presents comprehensive reports about the quality of religious education in the school to governors, enabling them to offer well-informed and effective support and challenge. Leaders and Governors demonstrate forensic monitoring to consistently improve standards within the school, leading to outstanding outcomes.

## Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship .....

1

### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school .....

1

### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship .....

1

Pupils fully engage themselves in prayer and liturgy and show active participation and reverence. Their singing is joyful, and they are reflective in their responses. Pupils demonstrate various ways of praying through meditation, praying the Rosary, and reflections. Links are made with home and the broader community through prayer bags. Pupils often take home a symbol, object, or phrase as a go-forth mission to bring liturgy into their homes. Pupils work well with staff to prepare prayer and liturgy and are willing and enthusiastic to be involved. Pupils are developing their independence in creating liturgies, and plans are in place to build on this increasing independence, along with regular evaluation of the quality of prayer. Prayer is an integral part of school life, and the pupils enjoy leading them. The experience of being in a faithful, prayerful community positively impacts the spiritual and moral development of all pupils, irrespective of their ability or faith background. Pupils have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the Church's liturgical year and make connections between it and various school events.

Prayer is central to the life of the school and is evident through various approaches to worship. Daily patterns of prayer, Gospel mission assembly, and weekly Mass faithfully reflect the rhythm of prayer across the school. Traditional prayers are being taught across the school but are not yet embedded and progressive across all year groups. Through effective training and accessible online recourses, staff are highly skilled in supporting pupils to plan and lead well-constructed prayer and liturgies. Pupils are beginning to use a range of creative forms. Still, the effectiveness with which they choose a wide variety of art forms and music, along with a secure understanding of artefacts they can use on a prayer focus, is not yet embedded. The use of space is highly creative and imaginative; the school chapel is a precious sacred space, along with the beautiful outdoor prayer garden with a fountain cross. The school has an action plan to help pupils participate more fully in the liturgy in the local parish, and this is in development.

Leaders and governors ensure the schools' policy on prayer and liturgy, along with the guidance document, is accessible and used by the staff. However, it does not fully support the progression of traditional prayers or has clear expectations for building participation skills for each year group. Leaders and governors ensure a clear plan of events throughout the liturgical year to support each pupil's faith formation. The whole community is aware of holy days of obligation and saints days; leaders prioritise these. All staff understand the centrality of prayer, and leaders ensure that all staff are well supported to lead worship. Leaders, including the parish priest, can confidently bring the understanding of the Church's ministry to the community's needs through planned prayer and liturgy. Leaders and governors have created a strategic succession plan to maintain current outcomes. The resources provided for this school are of a high standard, well organised, and accessible by all, and this is prioritised in the budget. The monitoring and review cycle by leaders and governors is prioritised and demonstrates rigour, challenge, and progress. All stakeholders are integral and valued in the school's evaluation of prayer and liturgy.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	140803
Full postal address of the school	Silverdale Road, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 2TA
School phone number	01782 619685
Name of head teacher or principal	Denise Mellor
Chair of governing board	Gillian Regan
School Website	<a href="http://www.stmarycatholicprimary.co.uk">www.stmarycatholicprimary.co.uk</a>
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Christ the King Catholic Collegiate
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	February 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Paul Madia	Lead inspector
Veronica Gosling	Team inspector

## Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement