



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC ACADEMY

Part of the Painsley Catholic Academy

Cruso Street, Leek, Staffordshire, ST13 8BW

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| Inspection date | 21 st & 22 nd November 2016 |
| Reporting Inspector | Mr Dominic Collins |

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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| Type of School | Academy |
| Age range of pupils | 3-11 years |
| Number on roll | 186 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of Directors |
| Chair of Governors | Mr John Pennington |
| Telephone number | 01538 483190 |
| E-mail address | headteacher@st-marys-leek.staffs.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | November 2011 |
| DFE School Number | 860 3463 |
| Unique Reference Number | 138725 |
| Headteacher | Mrs Gillian Wretham |
| Previous inspection: | 2 |
| This inspection: | 1 |

Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector.
- The focus of the inspection was on the quality, leadership, and impact of the school's provision of Catholic life, collective worship, and religious education (RE).
- The inspector observed teaching across three RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lessons were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Multi Academy Company (MAC), RE link governor, the headteacher, the subject leader, parish priest and parents.
- The inspector attended a whole school Mass, a prayer assembly, class collective worship and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of teaching and learning in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents including the school's self evaluation, data about pupils' achievement and progress, RAISEonline, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals.

Information about the school

- St. Mary's is an average sized Catholic primary school serving the parish of St. Mary's in Leek.
- The school is part of the Painsley Catholic Academy, formed in September 2012, comprising seven schools which also include Painsley Catholic College, Cheadle.
- The chair of the board of directors is a national leader of governance, the chief executive is a national leader of education.
- There are currently 186 children on roll of whom 52% are baptised Catholic.
- The majority of pupils are from white British backgrounds, the proportion of ethnic minority pupils is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is in line with the national average, while the number with special educational needs is below average.
- St. Mary's school has undergone significant recent change. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2015 and two new members of teaching staff joined the school in September 2016.
- The school is proud of its achievements in a number of nationally accredited awards including Healthy Schools, Leading Parent Partnership Award, Dyslexia-full status, Primary Quality Mark and Fair Trade Award, the school is currently working towards accreditation of the Rights Respecting Schools Award.

Main Findings

- St. Mary's is a welcoming and inclusive school and its outstanding Catholic life and religious education is firmly centred around the school mission in action that strives to provide the very best outcomes for all its pupils.
- This vision is shared by directors, governors, the school leadership and a dedicated staff team who together place the spiritual and moral development of the pupils as their highest priority.
- Strong, committed leadership and clear directional guidance in RE sets the high standards expected to ensure positive outcomes in progress and attainment for all pupils.

- Development planning is based upon thorough monitoring and accurate evaluation that is shared to inform clear priorities for action and regular review.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual, moral and vocational development: provision and outcomes

- St. Mary's is a welcoming and inclusive school. Its outstanding Catholic ethos permeates the school community in every way. The pupils have a clear understanding of its values and mission and are eager to express their Catholic identity in the way they embrace it.
- The school family, depicted within the image of Christ, the statement of mission values and the guiding message of the school prayer, written by the children, is prominently displayed and forms a powerful trilogy that epitomises the essence and purpose of St. Mary's Catholic life.
- Pupils are immensely proud of their school. Their cheerful, courteous behaviour is exemplary, during lessons and around the school generally. This, coupled with their smart appearance, reflects all they do; impressing by their initiative, positive attitudes and developing maturity.
- The quality of relationships within the school is excellent and children show trust, kindness and a genuine friendship towards one another. As a consequence, the atmosphere is happy and respectful, where pupils can learn, play and pray together in a caring and safe environment.
- The staff are a cheerful, committed and effective team who know the children well. They are excellent role models who vigilantly monitor and guide pupils throughout the day, thus ensuring they aspire to the high expectations made of them.
- Pupils know how much they are valued as individuals and recognise the responsibility they have towards each other. They show great respect and sensitivity in supporting less able pupils and those new to the school. Pupils are listened to and their opinions sought. This does much to build their self-esteem.
- Pupils respond positively to the school ethos, driven by the gospel message. They have a clear understanding that we are all equal as children of God and recognise the importance of showing love, reconciliation and compassion for our neighbour, as this forms the essential foundation of Catholic community.
- Awareness of the needs of others and a developing understanding of different cultures and beliefs, in school and the wider community, has a high priority in the life of the school. St. Mary's is currently working towards the Rights Respecting Schools Award. Pupils have taken part in CAFOD activities to develop their understanding of global citizenship and Catholic virtues.
- The school has developed strong links with the parish. Parents and parishioners are invited to the weekly Mass held in school, in addition to celebration assemblies and liturgical events throughout the year.
- The parish priest, deacon and parish catechists are very supportive of the Catholic life of the school.
- The parish priest and deacon visit the school regularly and are key partners in the planning of masses, assemblies and liturgies. In addition they provide valuable support and guidance in the development of RE throughout the school and lead

workshops for parents and children after school as part of the sacramental programme.

- The school is an integral part of the vibrant parish community and in addition to supporting each other throughout the year, they celebrate an annual 'Club Day' together with other church groups and schools in the locality.
- Provision for collective worship is outstanding. Prayer is an integral part of the school day and there are many opportunities for staff and pupils to pray and reflect together.
- Pupils' response to collective worship is very positive; they are attentive and reverent in prayer and understand the importance it has in their daily lives.
- A school prayer book is given to all Year 6 children as a leaving present and to all Reception children on entry as a welcome present. The children are very proud of this 'ownership' as they are also used at home to share family prayer as a response to a parent questionnaire. As a consequence, children are at ease when praying.
- In addition to demonstrating a sound knowledge of traditional prayers pupils are able to express their own prayers and petitions confidently with others.
- Music and visual resources are used effectively to create a prayerful atmosphere. Attractive religious displays and quiet prayer stations around the school offer further stimulation for thoughtful reflection.
- Mass celebrated in school during the inspection was an uplifting experience. Children read with clarity and expression and their inspirational singing readily engaged the parents, parishioners and governors who were present. The pupils' understanding of the Mass is further nourished and encouraged by the example and commitment of all members of staff.
- The quality of collective worship is further enhanced through the high quality support the lay chaplain offers each school across the MAC. This takes the form of working with staff and children in order to support the planning and evaluation of the liturgy.
- Pupils are encouraged to become involved in organising and leading worship and are well supported in doing so.
- Children enjoy celebrating a variety of religious feasts and prayer services throughout the year, including their class patron saint. Masses and assemblies are planned around the liturgical calendar.
- Pupils are eager to engage in a variety of responsibilities around the school and they perform their duties with pride. The older children act as peer mediators and play an active role in the school 'buddy scheme' for Foundation Year pupils. The school pupil council is a very effective group, who meet regularly with staff and project the views of others, they have successfully requested additional items of playground apparatus for example.
- The school Catholic life has an exciting vibrancy and the children respond enthusiastically to the many opportunities to deepen their spiritual, moral and vocational development.
- Class and whole school activities embrace the work of, CAFOD, UNICEF, Vocations day and Rights and Respect day for example.
- The St. Vincent de Paul children's group (Mini Vinnies) for Key Stage 2 children is very well supported. They meet regularly with the school chaplain and have a special role to evaluate the quality of class prayer areas. They are currently reviewing the school prayer.

- Children in Year 6 attend a retreat at Alton Castle as part of their preparation to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- In accordance with the school motto 'love and serve', pupils and their families give of their time so generously to support the school by organising and contributing to raising funds for a variety of charities, locally and for the wider community.
- In addition to evidence of minutes, surveys, planning and evaluations, written and pictorial evidence relating to Catholic life is recorded in a large scale book which is prominently displayed in each class prayer area. These beautifully presented volumes depict the joyful faith journey pupils receive and are proud to share.
- Prayer is embedded in the daily life of the school community, where evangelisation is at its heart. Catholic life and collective worship makes a very powerful contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils and reflects the strong Catholic character of the school.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership of Catholic life and Collective Worship

- The leadership of Catholic life and collective worship is outstanding.
- There is clear evidence that leaders and governors share a strong commitment to the Church's mission in education and are extremely successful in developing the Catholic life of the school.
- Governors know the school well, visit on a regular basis, and offer support and encouragement to all members of staff. They are well organised, have a broad base of expertise and are dedicated in supporting the school to be successful in its mission.
- Recommendations arising from the last RE inspection have been fully addressed and the school leadership has continued to develop Catholic life and collective worship through regular self-evaluation at a range of levels.
- The spiritual development of pupils, using the values and practise of the school mission as a point of reference, is given the highest priority and is central to all work undertaken in school.
- Directors are fully involved, working in unison with the school leadership, in promoting the Catholic life of the school by monitoring the school development plan.
- The link director regularly conducts learning walks around the school with a focus on Catholic life. This includes classroom visits where RE is being taught.
- Governors are kept fully informed of monitoring and evaluation outcomes relating to Catholic life and collective worship, through their visits to school and detailed reports from the mission and strategy committee. The principal, also presents an annual written report for directors. The academy committee review all related policies.
- Collective worship evaluation is now formally recorded. Liturgy planning profiles are used for Mass, whole school and phase assemblies; all outcomes are shared at staff meetings. Crucially, all evaluation outcomes form the basis of a comprehensive improvement plan. This is an excellent working document broken down into specific focus areas that clearly identify areas of strength as well as those to be reviewed and developed. The analysis of agreed action and success criteria is practical and informative.

- All newly appointed staff are very well supported and fully inducted in their roles and responsibilities in the Catholic life of the school and provision is made for them to attend appropriate continuing professional development.
- Further support is offered by directors, who recognise the importance of ensuring that ongoing professional development is provided to maintain their effective governance and the needs of all staff, pupils and whole school priorities.
- In order to facilitate smooth progression at every level, directors give close attention to succession planning.
- Directors are always involved in the recruitment of staff and diocesan advice is sought. All staff have contracts in accordance with Catholic Education Service guidelines.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education

- The leadership and provision for Religious Education is outstanding and as a consequence this ensures pupils attain high levels of achievement.
- Inspection evidence is able to confirm that systems used by the school leadership for monitoring and evaluating the school's work in RE are extremely effective. In view of their high quality and rigorous application, these well-structured systems that include scrutiny of planning, assessment of children's work, questionnaires, lesson observations and learning walks, give a clear and reliable insight into the quality of RE provision and the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.
- The quality of teaching is regularly monitored by the senior leadership and RE leader to maintain the high standards expected. Written feedback is given in a supportive and professional manner.
- Detailed monitoring records are kept and show a consistent pattern of good and some outstanding teaching across the school. Their reliability is confirmed by the excellent quality of teaching observed during the inspection.
- In accordance with diocesan guidelines, staff conduct assessments of pupils' work in RE. The tracking of pupils' progress is very effective and is a strength of the school. This is due to the creation of a culture that has been embedded by the senior leadership and subject leader, where all staff are alert to identifying progress of individuals and providing appropriate interventions when required.
- Meticulous analysis of assessment data show that from initial baseline on entry, pupils receive a very positive start to their faith journey and make rapid progress in RE.
- Attainment of the majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 is in line with diocesan expectations. This momentum of progress is maintained throughout Key Stage 2. Records updated in July 2016 show that attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 was generally high. These overall levels of attainment compare favourably with pupil performance and standards in literacy.
- Pupils demonstrate an excellent work ethic, are eager to achieve and are highly motivated by the varied learning routes to which they are exposed and their own desire to succeed.

- Pupils clearly enjoy their RE lessons and respond enthusiastically to the exciting range of tasks, questions and opportunities to collaborate. They are able to offer opinions and to consider the opinions of others.
- An extensive range of resources, including ICT, has been developed and these also broaden the quality of curriculum delivery in the classroom.
- The school has recently received staff diocesan training about 'Developing Thinking Skills in RE'. The impact of this training, on raising attainment for individuals and some groups of children, now needs to be evaluated.
- The quality of pupils' work in their books is very impressive. Careful attention is given to presentation and content and they are proud of their achievements.
- Marking is used consistently to inform pupils about their progress; they receive high quality feedback and guidance of how to improve further.
- Excellent support staff are effectively deployed to guide individuals and groups in their learning.
- The RE curriculum complies fully with diocesan requirements and has been successfully adapted to ensure that all pupils are able to engage in their learning about religion and from religion and recognise the relevance it has in their daily lives.

Recommendations

In order to improve the school should:

- Broaden the role of pupils in planning, preparing and leading collective worship across each key stage.
- Following the recent staff diocesan training 'Developing Thinking Skills in RE', evaluate the impact of strategies used to raise the attainment of individuals and groups of children.