



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

URN: 125708

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

Date: 18-19 May 2023

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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

- The head teacher has brought about a rapid improvement in standards at St Mary's since her appointment.
- Leaders and governors prioritise their guardianship of the school's mission, ensuring it is well understood by pupils and staff.
- An effective partnership between school and home ensures that families also benefit from the love and care that pupils receive.
- Teachers clearly communicate the value of religious education to their pupils.
- Scripture is at the heart of all school activities, including prayer. Its messages are well understood by pupils who are enthusiastic about following them.

What the school needs to improve:

- Provide a range of well-planned and effective opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of pupils and staff.
- Write, implement, and monitor a well-formulated and fit for purpose policy on prayer and liturgy that is accessible and useful to staff.
- Follow-up monitoring activities with rigour so that leaders' findings consistently lead to targeted, strategic improvements.

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:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2

Because the mission, 'Inspiring children to love learning and live in the light of Christ', is well known by the pupils, they can discuss its meaning and how they live it out at school and home. They are proud of their responsibility to inspire others to be followers of Jesus and are keen to undertake activities that promote this, such as being play leaders. St Mary's is a happy and secure school because pupils know God loves them. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how Jesus' example provides the blueprint for their behaviour and actions. One pupil said, 'You just have to ask yourself whether Jesus would be proud of you, then you know if you're doing the right thing.' They have a working knowledge of the values and virtues the school promotes because leaders routinely highlight and celebrate these in a weekly assembly. Consequently, pupils' moral development is good. Staff provide opportunities for pupils to witness Catholic Social Teaching; for example, in developing a partnership with Galanos House, a local dementia care home. Another example is when a pupil independently sought support from the local mayor to acquire litter pickers so pupils can care better for God's creation. However, their knowledge of specific Catholic Social Teachings is very basic. The 'Growing in Faith Together' (GIFT) team is enthusiastic about its work and the changes they have made in school, particularly regarding the inclusion of pupil artwork in prayer areas. Pupils' involvement in chaplaincy is currently limited because the provision is minimal.

The mission is fundamental to all school activities because it focuses on living in the light of Christ, and pupils learn about Him by frequently studying the Bible. Furthermore, because of the mission's centrality to school life and the importance placed on it by leaders, staff are keen to promote it, for example, by hosting a pyjama party for Fr Hudson's Care. Everybody understands the importance and influence of Jesus Christ; consequently, pupils and staff treat one another respectfully, and leaders work tirelessly to include everyone in activities. Staff are good role models to their pupils. They confidently demonstrate Christian behaviours and attitudes because of the head teacher's

model discipleship. Pupils feel loved; they speak eloquently about the care adults show them in school and how it makes them feel. Relationship, sex, and health education (RSHE) provides a holistic vision of the human person and meets diocesan requirements.

Through their regular visits, monitoring and meetings, governors effectively discharge their canonical responsibilities. The school's Catholic life and mission are high priorities in their work, as demonstrated in its prominence in improvement planning and their involvement in facilitating its progress. Leaders and governors know St Mary's is at the parish's service and seek to work well with it. For example, the school co-hosts Stations of the Cross each year, and pupils regularly attend the celebration of Mass in the parish church. Parishioners are highly supportive of the school's involvement in parish life. The wider curriculum is beginning to be delivered through a Catholic lens. For example, texts focussing on social justice are selected for study in English, and there is a plan for the school's virtues and values to shape the provision of physical education. However, this is yet to be realised. Staff can speak of the influence of the faith on their subject teaching, but there is currently no formal curriculum plan for a fully Catholic curriculum. Self-evaluation relating to Catholic life and mission is accurate and used to shape school improvement plans. However, because leaders' follow-up of monitoring activities is informal, there is not enough rigour in their accountability for further enhancing it.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

2



Pupils frequently and joyfully use a wide range of subject-specific language linked to the liturgical year, meaning they can talk about the demands religion has on everyday life. They are engaged in and enjoy religious education lessons, resulting in good behaviour, exemplified in their ability to concentrate well during independent work. Furthermore, they are enthusiastic and keen to learn about the teachings of Jesus because they are given time in lessons to reflect spiritually on what they are learning. Pupils make progress in all classrooms, though it is not necessarily in line with expectations because lessons do not always match their needs. Most pupils speak confidently about their learning and show a high level of subject-specific vocabulary because teachers use repetition effectively as a teaching tool. The presentation of work in pupils' books is generally good. They are motivated to improve their work by responding to reflection questions that teachers stick into their books. Pupils' attainment in religious education is average, with an improving trend since the appointment of a new subject leader.

Teachers' confidence in their subject knowledge is improving, as demonstrated in their ability to respond to pupils' inquisitive questions competently. Teaching is almost always at least good because staff receive training relating to teaching and learning, and they feel supported and confident to teach the subject. Moreover, all teachers are committed to the subject's value and communicate this clearly to pupils. Teachers' feedback often helps pupils recognise their learning successes and what they need to improve. However, sometimes feedback is insufficiently focussed on the lesson's learning intention, meaning pupils are not always being helped to make progress against the planned curriculum. Teachers' questions sometimes get side-tracked by pupils' unanticipated responses, resulting in slower-than-expected progress. However, there are also instances of excellent questioning in some classrooms, though this

practice is not currently shared with all staff. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to express their learning creatively, which further contributes to pupils' enjoyment of the subject. A recent focus on developing extended writing in religious education has also generated further opportunities for pupils to demonstrate a greater depth of knowledge when they have been used appropriately.

Leaders and governors regularly monitor and review the outcomes achieved in religious education so they can be confident that continuous improvements are being made to the school's provision. Governors are strategically involved in improving religious education, resulting in a comprehensive action plan being implemented by the subject leader. However, whilst the procedure is robust, improvements do not always have an immediate impact because there is not enough rigour when leaders follow up on areas they have identified for improvement. Governors ensure that religious education has parity with other core subjects concerning staffing and resourcing; they are actively involved in monitoring classroom timetables and pupils' work to ensure the school always complies with the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales requirements. Under the direction of a strong subject leader, there is a clear vision for teaching and learning in religious education, and this has resulted in changes to the curriculum's design which have improved pupil outcomes. This includes a focus on knowledge recall, which is expected in all classrooms and is effective in how it primes pupils to build upon what they have previously learnt. Opportunities for pupils to engage in enrichment activities that enhance the school's delivery of the religious education curriculum are not yet embedded. However, there are many opportunities that enhance the school's Catholic life and mission.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

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

2

Pupils respond very well to prayer. They reflect silently, sing joyfully, and respond confidently in worship. Pupils' knowledge of the Church's liturgical year and how this affects prayer routines is secure; for example, they know that the Paschal Candle contains symbolism to remind us that God was present at the beginning of time, meaning He is worthy of praise. Pupils are encouraged to collaborate to plan and lead prayer for their peers in age-appropriate ways. This leads pupils to gradually become more independent in their prayer leadership as they get older. However, the quality varies because there is no defined strategy to achieve this. Pupils evaluate acts of worship in school and suggest ways they can be improved; in particular, the GIFT team provides staff with feedback on prayer focus areas around the school site. Pupils speak eloquently about how wider school life influences their prayers but struggle to articulate how what they study in the curriculum does this. They know how prayer affects their personal lives because of teachers' strategies to record this information. For example, 'go forth jars' are used for pupils to write down how they respond to the challenge put to pupils during their weekly extended classroom prayer time.

Prayer is a central part of school life and a routine element of whole school and staff gatherings. Consequently, everybody knows that all they do in school is offered as an act of worship; this very much influences the school's approach to behaviour management. Pupils are more confident in using the traditional prayers of the Church, though their repertoire is relatively narrow. Leaders are currently taking action to address this using diocesan resources, with impact starting to show in pupils' recognition of prayers such as a prayer to guardian angels and The Angelus. Seasonally appropriate Scripture is at the heart of all prayer in school. A clear structure to prayer is implemented universally; because of this, pupils are confident in speaking about prayer themes. Appropriate liturgical music and works of art capture pupils'

interest in prayer. However, the quality of provision in classrooms is variable throughout the school because there is no policy setting out leaders' expectations, and staff do not receive regular, high-quality formation or opportunities for their skill development. Consequently, the awe and wonder generated at the start of prayer sessions are frequently punctuated by the distribution of resources part-way through or pupils moving back to their tables to complete an activity. Families and parishioners are regularly invited to participate in the school's prayer life. Leaders have given thought to strategies to increase pupils' responses in the liturgy, which the parish priest supports.

Governors and leaders ensure that the school timetable is built around Eucharistic celebration. There is a regular schedule of Mass, celebrated in school and the parish church, and all holy days of obligation and significant feasts are observed. Teachers are supported in their prayer development as and when needed. They feel well supported by the head teacher, who is highly skilled in leading prayer in various ways. However, in the absence of formation and targeted training, the success of staff replicating this skill is variable. Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation of prayer is accurate. Because they have identified inconsistencies in the provision of prayer, they have rightly increased their monitoring of it this year. Consequently, there has been some rise in standards; however, the variability in the quality of provision is partly facilitated by leaders because monitoring is not rigorously followed up.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	125708
Full postal address of the school	Daventry Road, Southam, CV47 1PS
School phone number	01926 812512
Name of head teacher or principal	Maureen Collier
Chair of governing board	Angela Scull
School Website	www.stmaryssoutham.org.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Ben McArdle

Lead inspector

Claire Restell

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