



SS Mary and John's Catholic Primary Academy

URN: 139800

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

10–11 July 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

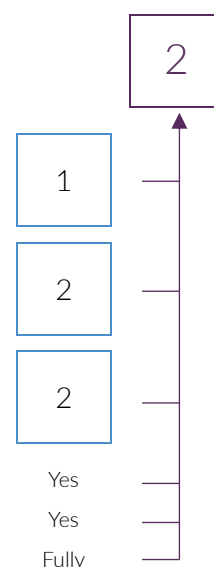
Collective worship (p.7)

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

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



What the school does well

- Pupils deeply enjoy their religious education lessons and leading prayer and liturgy in class.
- Pupils embrace the school's mission. They are fully and actively involved in promoting it.
- Inspirational leadership has led to rapid and successful progress across the Catholic life and mission of the school, religious education lessons and collective worship.
- Staff are fully committed to the school's Catholic mission; they feel valued, trusted, and empowered to contribute to its success.
- Teaching other religions and faiths is highly valued by the pupils, who recognise that it enhances their spiritual and moral development.

What the school needs to improve

- Link Catholic social teaching into all subjects so that the broader curriculum is delivered through a Catholic lens.
- Enable pupils to know clearly what they need to do to improve their learning in religious education.
- Upskill pupils' to confidently hold prayerful silence when preparing and leading their own reflections and meditations.

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

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

1

Pupils thoroughly understand the school's mission and can explain what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. They actively and significantly enhance the school's Catholic life through chaplaincy leadership roles, such as faith ambassadors, eco-warriors, and liturgy leaders. They know their responsibilities and embrace them willingly. They are happy in school and feel valued, cared for, and secure. Pupils have a strong understanding of Catholic social teaching and their responsibilities to help others and to care for our common home through initiatives such as supporting charities, litter picking, and recycling. Learning about various faiths is strong, and pupils highly value this; they understand the importance of respecting and valuing others, significantly enhancing their spiritual and moral development. They value opportunities to visit places of worship, including a gurdwara and a synagogue. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and across the school is exemplary; they show deep respect for themselves and others as God's creations. The faith ambassadors are proud to represent the school. They have achieved much of their ambitious action plan over the last year, including setting up a school food bank, working towards achieving the *LiveSimply Award*, and supporting the school's prayer life. They highly value being role models and leaders within the school.

The mission statement is the catalyst for school life. It is rooted in gospel values and is highly visible throughout the school. Staff are fully committed to embracing the school's Catholic life by supporting all pupils and through the strong relationships they build. They are exemplary role models in the love and care they show towards each other and their pupils, especially in the sensitive care they show for those most vulnerable. There is a palpable sense of family where all look after each other. Everyone is welcomed to the school; this is seen at the beginning of each day, for example, when the principal and the pastoral lead greet families as they arrive. This

provides an opportunity to build strong relationships and for everyone to feel valued in the community. The school's physical environment enhances pupils' formation, celebrates pupils' achievements, witnesses social outreach, and reflects the school's Catholic identity and mission. Each class has a scripture passage displayed on the door linked to their termly Catholic social teaching focus; linking this to class prayer and lessons ensures that the pupils know it, but Catholic social teaching is yet to be fully embedded throughout the entire curriculum. Relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) aligns with diocesan requirements and is rooted in Church teaching. It is adapted to meet the needs of specific cohorts and to address current local issues.

Leaders, governors and the multi-academy company (MAC) are highly ambitious for the school and ensure that the mission is central to daily life. The school actively participates in training and network opportunities the diocese offers and embraces the bishop's vision. Parish links are being developed, with the parish priest's weekly visits to the school to celebrate Mass and support religious education lessons and vocations week. Parents are supportive of the mission, and good communication has led to strong relationships being built. The principal is an inspirational leader; her clear vision and ambition for the school have led to rapid progress over the last year. Staff feel well supported by leaders and each other; they feel valued, trusted and empowered. The principal feels well supported by the chair of governors and the expertise and experience offered by the MAC. Governors, directors, parents, staff and pupils are involved in the robust monitoring and accurate evaluation, contributing to the school's continued progress. There is rigorous analysis and self-challenge in these processes.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

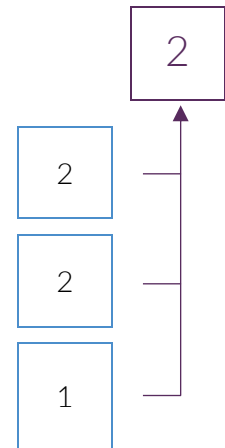
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Pupils thoroughly enjoy their religious education lessons and actively engage in high-quality class discussions. They are making good progress because their knowledge and understanding are securely embedded. Focusing on religious vocabulary throughout the school enables pupils from the youngest age to articulate their learning with confidence, meaning, and authenticity. Knowledge recaps in all lessons ensure that prior learning is consolidated before development. Most pupils can concentrate well and work independently and with a partner, often supporting each other in their learning. They are curious learners who are enthusiastic about joining class discussions and expressing their knowledge and ideas, frequently referring to scripture. The use of 'I wonder' questions encourages curiosity, and the questions pupils generate show the depth of their thinking. Pupils' learning is well presented and shows good progression. Support staff sensitively and compassionately care for pupils with additional needs to allow them to access learning fully. Success criteria are being developed across the school to enable pupils to know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. The standard of work expected in religious education is in line with other core subjects, as is pupils' attainment.

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge due to the support they have received from the religious education subject leader and the principal. Lessons are coherently planned with links to school virtues, Catholic social teaching, the mission statement, and pupils' daily life experience, ensuring the curriculum is relevant. Skilful questioning is used effectively in all classrooms to challenge pupils to think more deeply. Teachers and teaching assistants provide guidance, encouragement, and praise to ensure pupil motivation. However, teachers' tasks do not always allow pupils to fulfil the success criteria they set. Feedback strategies are being developed to show pupils what they need to do to make progress, but it is too soon to determine their impact accurately. Staff recognise and are committed to the importance of religious

education, especially pupils' spiritual and moral development; subsequently, opportunities for reflection are built into some lessons. Class faith books show that pupils are allowed to present their learning creatively alongside written work, for example, through drama and artwork. Good-quality resources enhance lessons and enrich learning. For example, they can use photos of their baptisms when learning about the sacrament and act out a wedding ceremony in the Nursery Class.

The school uses the diocesan-wide scheme, which ensures coverage of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. This has been adapted to extend pupils' learning and provide challenge where appropriate. Religious education is treated as a core subject and enjoys parity regarding timetabling, staffing, funding, and training with other core subjects. Training provided by the diocese, the MAC, the religious education subject leader, and the principal is high-quality and has increased staff subject knowledge and confidence. The subject leader and principal have an ambitious vision for religious education; the staff coaching programme has led to increased expectations for the subject and rapid and continuous improvements in its teaching and learning. Leaders ensure the curriculum is thoughtfully designed to meet all pupils' needs, with tasks adapted for specific pupils and appropriate support and challenge provided wherever applicable. The parish priest provides enrichment for religious education, including visits to his church. Governors and pupils contribute to the robust monitoring schedule, and forensic analysis leads to well-targeted plans.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

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

1

2

Pupils' participation in prayer and liturgy is respectful and reverent. They are eager and confident to contribute to whole-school and class prayer. They are attentive in all worship and clearly enjoy prayer experiences. Pupils' singing is phenomenal, a clear expression of joy and praise. Pupils are offered various opportunities to pray, including those that reflect the liturgical year, such as Stations of the Cross and the crowning of Mary, alongside opportunities for spontaneous prayer. All pupils have the chance to be liturgy leaders in class. A framework is used throughout the school to ensure a consistency of prayer opportunities, and pupils are confident and proud to prepare and lead prayer. They can plan alongside staff, incorporating their own choice of questions and prayers, including those written by themselves and traditional prayers, and this is being developed throughout the school at age-appropriate levels. However, pupils' seeking of immediate responses sometimes detracts from their prayers' intended themes and purposes, making it difficult for them to hold extended times of prayerful silence. Pupils reflect on prayer experiences and show a good understanding that prayer inspires social action in the call to discipleship.

Prayer is central to school life, and daily and weekly prayer patterns reflect the Church's liturgical year. Pupils are given the opportunity for spontaneous prayer by putting their independently written prayers into a basket in the school hall. These are selected to be proudly read by their authors at school gatherings. Pupils' prayers are well-written and sincere, showing great compassion towards others' needs. All prayer and liturgy are rooted in scripture, which is well-chosen and link to the 'response' and 'go forth' actions of the school's prayer structure. Staff value the exemplary practice of leadership, which has instilled confidence in them to plan and deliver prayer and liturgy in their classrooms. Staff provide good role models for the pupils in their participation in prayers, singing, and responses to the gospel. Hymns chosen to enhance

prayer and liturgy are joyful, vibrant, and enriched by the recent Easter music retreat. Artwork generates high-quality discussions and allows pupils to express their ideas. All classes have well-maintained, thoughtful and cared-for prayer areas with age-appropriate artefacts, prayers, and artwork, alongside pupils' own work and prayers. There is a growing relationship with the local parish, with faith ambassadors writing prayers for those who are sick, but the full school community has yet to serve the parish actively.

The school's policy reflects current practice, and the comprehensive progression of prayers in place is used across the school to develop pupils' abilities to plan and lead prayer and liturgy. The liturgical year is celebrated in school with regular opportunities for Mass, including on holy days of obligation and other celebrations, including Mary's birthday and various saints' feast days. Staff recognise that celebrating the Eucharist is central to school life through regular participation in multiple Masses, including the annual MAC Mass. Whole school worship follows the same format as class prayer and liturgy, ensuring staff have excellent role models to aspire towards. It is carefully planned to ensure the inclusion of scripture, reflective questions, spontaneous and traditional prayers, and music, and it is followed up with a 'go forth' action linked to the theme. Leaders ensure that each class's high-quality artefacts, Bibles, prayer books, and artwork enrich prayer experiences. The monitoring schedule ensures that the school constantly evaluates prayer and liturgy and includes governors' and pupils' views. This has led to pupils being involved in the planning and delivering prayer and liturgy, which continues to be further developed throughout the school.

Information about the school

Full name of school	SS Mary and John's Catholic Primary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	139800
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	336 2008
Full postal address of the school	Caledonia Road, Wolverhampton, WV2 1HZ
School phone number	01902 558780
Headteacher	Krystyna Bickley
Chair of governing board	Christopher Walker
School Website	www.ssmaryandjohns.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Francis and St Clare Catholic MAC
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	May 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Dawn Summers-Breeze
Sarah Rathbone

Lead
Team

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