



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and Inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
of the Education Act 2005

URN 100623

St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Northwood Rd
Whitstable
CT5 2EY

Inspection date: 17 November
2016

Chair of Governors:	Mr A Wilson
Headteacher:	Mr C Wright
Inspectors:	Mr DG Fox
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**DENOMINATIONAL
EDUCATION**

Introduction

Description of the school

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is situated in the Canterbury Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is an academy within the Kent Catholic Schools Partnership. The principal parish the school serves is Our Lady Immaculate, Whitstable, but pupils also come from Our Lady of Carmel, Faversham, Our Lady and the Sacred Heart, Herne Bay and St Thomas of Canterbury, Canterbury. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 49%. Overall, the weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education across the school is 10%.

The school takes pupils from ages 4 to 11. Currently there are 420 pupils on roll.

The school is situated in an area with a wide range of wealth and deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly average. There are 8 pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with a further 23 receiving Special Education Needs (SEN) support. There are 30 pupils for whom the school receives the Pupil Premium. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an Additional Language is below average. The vast majority of pupils are white British.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school in providing Catholic Education

**GRADE
2**

St Mary's is a good school with many outstanding features. Leaders, Governors and managers demonstrate a strong commitment to the Church's mission in education. Governors are regular visitors and know the school well. They are very supportive and are involved in planning and delivering improvements to the Catholic life of the school and progress in standards of learning. They know how St Mary's can become an outstanding Catholic school and have put appropriate policies and procedures in place.

The impact of the mission statement and Gospel values are clearly seen in the exemplary behaviour of the pupils both in the classroom and in the playground. Pupils are proud of their backgrounds and their school. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Most chose to add comments on the questionnaires acknowledging their children's enthusiasm for the school.

There is a distinct Catholic identity in the school with its many crucifixes and spiritual displays. A Reception pupil said in regard to the cross, "It's to God to make him happy. He'll see the sign and make him super happy".

There are excellent links with the parish. The Parish Priest welcomes the school for Masses and seasonal services. The school leads a Sunday Mass once a month. The school benefits from a priest from a nearby parish who works in the school several days a week. This is recognised and valued by pupils. The Headteacher and Religious Education Leader both attend the Parish-School link committee and staff are active within the parish. A Faith Team has been established to be a catalyst for Catholic growth, providing opportunities for developing links with parents.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- Further develop a rigorous system of monitoring standards in Religious Education. Governors should build on their excellent work as critical friends of the school.
- Continue to develop strategies to challenge all pupils, particularly the more able.
- To Extend Class Mass provision throughout the school allowing pupils to take the lead in the planning and preparation.

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

The school has a very spiritual and caring ethos. It provides a safe environment built on Gospel values. Staff and pupils appreciate the regular presence of the priest who contributes to the Catholic life of the school in acts of worship and by joining in the daily life of the community.

The mission statement puts Christ at the centre of the school's life. Teachers review the mission statement every year with their new class and pupils then write one of their own which becomes their code of conduct. Pupils value and respect each other. They are very appreciative of the care teachers have for them. They feel that teachers listen to them. Behaviour in lessons and throughout the school is excellent. Pupils respond well to regular praise, awards and house points which reinforce good behaviour.

Circle Time and Think Books give pupils opportunities to express their concerns confidentially know that a teacher will help and support them. The School Council highlighted the confidence and maturity pupils have in sharing their faith. One pupil said, "My friendship is important. We would not fall out over it."

In their responses, parents recognise the impact of the Catholic life of the school in pupils' understanding and practice of prayer.

Awareness of the needs of others is evident in the many fundraising activities. For example, non-uniform days raise money for the local children's hospice and Missio. Through the St Vincent De Paul link, the school recently collected money for sleeping bags for people in the Calais Jungle. The new Mini-Vinnies group meets weekly to help raise awareness and to organise fundraising activities.

The school responded with great faith to the loss of a teacher after a short illness. The strong belief of the Catholic community was evident as parents, pupils and staff came together to pray for the teacher, the family and the school community.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

Assessments show that the majority of pupils are in line with age appropriate levels of attainment. Although there is a three year improving trend of improvement, the Chair of Governors and Headteacher acknowledge that pupil progress needs to be further improved.

In all the lessons observed, pupils were engaged in learning and showed great interest in the topics. They displayed an enthusiasm for Religious Education and a pride in their work. Consequently, behaviour was exemplary and there were no pupils off task. In the Reception class a pupil went home and made a cross after a particular Religious Education lesson. Many parents responded that their children enjoy their lessons.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

Acts of worship engage pupils' interests and inspire reverence. In the school assembly, the Inspector was impressed with the way pupils were silent and attentive when appropriate and then joined in the hymn singing with enthusiasm and joy. Movingly, all pupils and teachers signed the hymns. Pupils are confident in writing and reading out their own prayers. The School Council said that they are proud that their prayers are shared with others. They are at ease when praying and no one is expected to act in a manner contrary to their beliefs. The priest commented that he is always impressed with the reverence pupils show. As class Masses are developed throughout all year groups, pupils will be given further opportunities to be involved in preparing the liturgy.

Prayer corners are a distinct feature of the school. The new spiritual garden will further enhance the opportunities for pupils to pray.

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How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leaders, governors and managers are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. The Catholic faith is at the centre of school life. Inspectors were impressed with the excellent understanding governors and school leaders have of the areas for development and the detailed plans to enhance the Catholic life of the school. They know that "being the faith" is never a finished product. The Headteacher said that they are "heading in the right direction."

Governors are regular visitors to the school to monitor and participate in the Catholic life of the school. Consequently, there are regular informal discussions with the Headteacher and Religious Education Leader as well as formal termly meetings. One governor said that it is obvious that "faith is growing" and that you can "feel the Holy Spirit."

The Headteacher's personal faith and vision have had and are continuing to have a positive impact on the spiritual life of the school and its caring ethos. He is passionate about the Catholic life of the school and determined to ensure that it continues to grow. He works effectively with governors, the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Religious Education Leader. He is developing stronger links with the parish and acknowledges the invaluable work of the priests in promoting the Catholic life of the school.

The Religious Education Leader is an outstanding role model for staff and pupils in her commitment to the spiritual development of staff and pupils. She works tirelessly with the Priest in promoting the faith Collective Worship and in Religious Education lessons. There are plans to extend class Masses across the school.

The school's self-evaluation reflects their passion for and commitment to the faith journey of the school. The plans for promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic life are detailed and reflect leaders' commitment to Catholic Education. They have a clear vision for the future of the school.

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leaders, governors and managers are fully committed to raising standards in Religious Education. They understand the need to develop greater scrutiny of standards of learning. Detailed analysis of the annual self-review highlights areas for development which become the whole School Development Plan and Religious Education action plan.

Standards data is analysed and discussed by governors. They are examining ways to make the monitoring process more rigorous in order to help them challenge and support improvements in standards. The link governor for Religious Education attends all Religious Education linked activities and reports to the Governing Body termly. Several governors carry out learning walks and book scrutinies. They feed back to the curriculum committee.

The Headteacher took up post at Easter 2016 after serving as Deputy Headteacher in the school for 5 years. He knows the strengths of the school and has a clear understanding of areas that need to be addressed. He ensures that there is a highly effective system of monitoring and intervention to ensure that the needs of pupils are met. Middle Leader meetings now include feedback regarding findings from Religious Education lessons and observations. Religious Education homework is now a main focus in the school's overall homework strategy.

The Senior Management Team and Religious Education Leader acknowledge that greater challenge for higher ability pupils is a priority. They understand what needs to be done to support staff in delivering high quality lessons and in assessing accurately and meaningfully. For example, they are continually developing their understanding of how they can effectively teach Religious Education to pupils who do not attend Church or who are of no faith. Their discussions clearly demonstrate their vision for pupils of all abilities and levels of faith.

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The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

Observed teaching was effective in motivating pupils and ensuring they learn and progress according to their ability. The school knows that challenging the higher ability pupils appropriately is a major priority. In most lessons there were well planned tasks and a lively pace. Consequently, concentration was sustained throughout lesson and real progress was made. Pupils clearly enjoy Religious Education and behaviour was exemplary.

The Religious Education Leader provides an outstanding example of giving support and challenge to all pupils, particularly the more able pupils. Inspectors felt that she should continue to model her expertise.

Religious Education assessment and Assessment for Learning are embedded with developmental marking in place. The impact is beginning to become evident in books across year groups. Pupils are given meaningful feedback. They take pride in their work and the quality of the work produced is high.

The use of Teaching Assistants in most lessons was effective in ensuring all pupils were supported.

Pupils confirmed that they enjoyed their lessons because of the variety of tasks and that teachers made it interesting.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning

All classes receive at least 10% of curriculum time for Religious Education. The programme, "The Way, the Truth and the Life", is adapted to meet the needs and experiences of pupils. It provides opportunities for discussion and reflection in lessons. In lessons, the curriculum provides good opportunities for the moral and spiritual development of pupils. Prayers were said and the candle on the prayer table was lit.

The impact of the curriculum in a wider sense, is evident in the way Catholic identity is displayed everywhere. The main entrance gives a warm welcome to a Catholic school. Parents have been observed using the prayer corner for quiet reflection and a spiritual garden has been developed for class and pupil use. New buildings have been named after Saints with two large crucifixes on display.

Staff and pupils together are creating a calm, spiritual school in which the individual is valued and cared for.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

Acts of worship are central to school life. Pupils pray in their classes three times daily. Classes have pupil prayer leaders. There are traditional prayers, silent personal prayers and pupils' own prayers. There is a well-planned programme of celebration assemblies and plans to extend school Masses across the school. The liturgical calendar is followed with special acts of worship such as Patron Saints' feast days and the main Church celebrations. In May the school celebrates the Crowning of Mary.

There are two weekly school assemblies lead by the Headteacher or the Deputy Headteacher. There are also separate key stage assemblies once a week. The way pupils respond and engage reflects how the quality of worship inspires them and offers a calm and prayerful atmosphere to be with God. The quality of Collective Worship is enhanced by the personal faith of the Headteacher and the regular contributions from the priests.

The school assembly attended by an Inspector was very good. The reflective silence, the signed hymn singing and the role play helped pupils begin to understand the feast of Christ the King. The assembly reflected the quality of worship throughout the school. This was acknowledged by pupils, staff and governors. Singing and prayers were very reverently done.

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