

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 145324

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Northampton

20–21 June 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

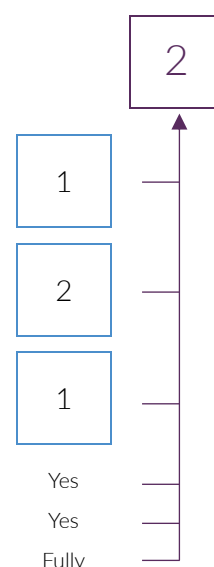
Collective worship (p.7)

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

- Strong relationships between pupils and staff have enabled the school to flourish and ensure that Christ is central in word and action.
- St Mary's is an inclusive school that fosters a strong culture of welcome underpinned by a Mission which is known and lived by all.
- Leaders and Governors are ambitious for the school, placing the school's mission at the heart of their endeavours.
- Teaching across the school is good because teachers have secure subject knowledge and consolidate pupils' prior learning.
- Pupils display exemplary learning behaviour, allowing them to progress in religious education.

What the school needs to improve

This Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection was carried out under canons 804 & 806 of the code of canon law. For maintained schools and academies in England it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.48 of the Education Act 2005. For maintained schools and academies in Wales it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.50 of the Education Act 2005.

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- Encourage pupils to take an active leading role in putting Catholic social teaching principles into action with increasing independence.
 - Provide opportunities for pupils to ask incisive questions of adults and peers in order to proactively deepen their learning.
 - Extend pupil leadership and evaluation opportunities, especially in prayer and liturgy across the school.

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

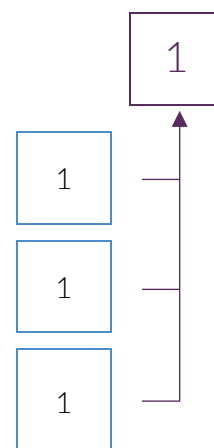
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

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

Leadership

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



As you enter St Mary's there is a strong culture of welcome, which is actively embraced by pupils and nurtured by staff. Pupils are proud to be part of St Mary's and participate fully in opportunities to celebrate their faith with a shared sense of belonging. They are active in their commitment to the mission, the language of which is used frequently and spontaneously by pupils of all ages, even in the nursery. Pupils' words and actions indicate they clearly understand Gospel values and Catholic social teaching. Older pupils have opportunities to take on responsibilities associated with the Catholic life of the school. A group of pupils serve as prayer pals and are proactive in organising prayer experiences for younger children. This significantly contributes to the Catholic life of the school. Pupils show mutual respect towards each other and demonstrate excellent behaviour. There is a sense of calm and order across the school. This care for one another extends to care in the local community, for example, links with the local care home and food bank. Teachers embrace the principles of Catholic social teaching, introducing these to all year groups through a range of activities. Pupils can link these to local issues and an example of this being some children writing to the town council to express their thoughts on the use of single use plastic in a local event. Consequently, pupils can speak about how the different principles link to their learning and they understand the positive impact of living these principles. One child indicated this by saying, "Everyone is different but that doesn't mean we should exclude anyone, everyone's a human."

Staff are firmly committed to the school mission and are excellent role models, resulting in a tangible sense of community. The school environment clearly and effectively reflects its Catholic character and the faith ambassadors play an attentive role in ensuring the Catholic identity is visible. They take ownership of maintaining these areas, making sure reflection areas relate to

the correct liturgical season or virtue focus. The school supports various charities including Cafod and the 'Love Christmas' campaign. However, pupils do not take leading roles in deciding which charities the school supports and would welcome this opportunity. The pastoral care and nurture for pupils and their families is a strength, and staff are committed to ensuring that the dignity of all individuals is safeguarded. Parents are appreciative of the support given and one parent commented, 'staff are extremely supportive and there is a real community spirit'.

Leaders recognise the development of Catholic life is a core responsibility and show an unwavering determination in wanting the best for the pupils. This means that they ensure Christ's teaching is at the heart of the school. The headteacher's positive and supportive outlook is appreciated by staff and parents. Leaders recognise the importance of parents being involved in their child's education, and are invited to numerous events within the school, including Friday celebration assemblies and class assemblies. The school, with the support from the parish priest, ensures that diocesan and liturgical initiatives are well-planned throughout the year. There is a good relationship between the school and St Mary's Parish. Governors prioritise the school's Catholic life and have a good knowledge of the improvements that have taken place over time. Regular visits enable governors to identify the impact of their work accurately. They join leaders in various monitoring activities, including environment walks, and looking at Catholic life books. Due to the regularity of monitoring undertaken by leaders and governors, the school has a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development concerning Catholic life. However, this now needs to translate into an improvement plan that is school specific. Self-evaluation in this area is accurate and has led to effective improvements since the last inspection.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

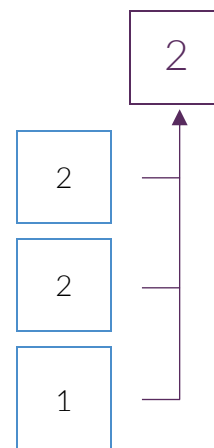
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 are enthusiastic about their learning in religious education. Pupils build on prior knowledge through short retrieval activities, which are embedded across all year groups. Throughout lessons, pupils engage well, showing good levels of confidence. They produce work which they are proud of. This has had an impact on outcomes, with most children achieving well in religious education and being confident in their knowledge. Subject-specific vocabulary is focused on, both during teacher input and in pupils' written work. This means pupils are constantly building a good understanding of the key concepts studied. All pupils show interest in lessons; they willingly discuss concepts through talk partners and undertake independent work with enthusiasm. The teaching of Catholic social teaching also enhances their ability to reflect ethically, which supports their understanding of how the Gospel can be applied to everyday lives. However, pupils do not often ask incisive questions about their learning to acquire a deeper, curious understanding. Classrooms are quiet and focussed learning spaces, enabling pupils to make good progress due to good learning behaviours. The feedback policy is applied consistently across the school and pupils can tell you how well they are doing in religious education. However, children were not always clear on the next steps and how to improve further.

Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge underpinning good teaching. Questions posed by teachers support the progress of pupils' understanding, however, they do not always challenge pupils enough to maximise their learning or build purposeful reflection time into lessons. The curriculum is mostly delivered sequentially with regular opportunities for knowledge retrieval, which ensures pupils' knowledge is secure. Further refinement to the Early Years provision is needed in order to ensure a robust sequence of learning from Nursery through to Reception. On occasion, the pace of lessons is too slow to enable those working at

greater depth to be appropriately challenged and moved on to the next step in their learning. Support for those with SEND is a strength; they are well-supported to access the curriculum and record their learning differently. Resources used in the classroom, particularly those made by the teacher, are well thought through and appropriate to support pupils with specific needs. Some teaching assistants are highly effective in recording pupils' work, encouraging, praising, and questioning to extend learning.

The school meets requirements by using the diocesan approved 'Come and See' scheme and are piloting new resources in Early Years in line with the new *Religious Education Directory*. The required 10% of curriculum time is dedicated to religious education, thereby fulfilling the Bishops' expectations. There are effective training opportunities for all staff from external sources and the subject leader. Leaders, including governors prioritise religious education standards on their improvement agenda. They ensure it has parity with other core subjects. The subject leader for religious education has a clear vision for developing the subject and is highly motivated to achieve this vision. Training is provided for all staff, which has ensured consistency in many areas in most year groups. Newer staff are well supported through knowledge files. The religious education link governor provides support and challenge for leaders and reports back to the full governing body regularly.

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

1

Leadership

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

1

1

Pupils readily embrace varied opportunities to participate in prayer and liturgy at St Mary's. They are respectful and attentive whilst listening to the Word of God, as shown during whole school worship. Pupils have a good understanding of a variety of ways of praying that are part of the rich Catholic heritage and can confidently join in with responses and gestures associated with them. As pupils progress through the school, they become more familiar with a range of traditional prayers. The experience of being in a faithful, prayerful community positively impacts on the spiritual and moral development of all pupils, irrespective of their ability or faith background. They are still and listen carefully. Pupils with additional needs are well supported, so they access worship alongside all pupils. Pupils are made to feel special in celebration assemblies, not just receiving certificates but receiving high praise from their teachers, raising their self-esteem. Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of the Church's liturgical year and make connections between it and various school events. Prayer and liturgy are planned each term according to the Church's cycle of seasons and feasts and are closely mapped to the school's virtues programme. Pupils speak of how prayer leads them to action, for example litter picking in the school grounds and local vicinity.

Prayer and liturgy are at the school's heart and there is a natural daily pattern of prayer for pupils that reflects its mission. The provision plan for worship is linked to the liturgical seasons, significant feast days and the weekly Gospel. This is enhanced by a close partnership with the parish priest, who visits the school regularly to support with spiritual formation. Through effective training and accessible online resources, staff are skilled in supporting pupils to lead prayer and liturgies. The use of space is creative and imaginative; the school prayer room is a precious sacred space, along with the outdoor prayer garden. A small group of pupils serve as prayer pals leading liturgy at lunchtimes to younger pupils. They demonstrate great maturity in

leading prayer and undertake this role with service and humility. Scripture is thoughtfully chosen to reflect the Church's cycle of seasons and virtue focus. In the hall, a virtue tree is a focal point where scripture is added to throughout the year. Parents enjoy the invitation to join their children in prayer at school and respond positively to such opportunities, saying 'I really value the numerous opportunities to share prayer with my child within school time.'

Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of how prayer and liturgy underpin the school's mission and subsequently give it the highest priority. The school's policy for prayer and liturgy is clear and accessible, resulting in a continuity of experience for all pupils. The subject leader is clearly in the forefront of provision and a strong partnership with the parish enhances this. Leaders have a well-structured calendar of planned events based on the Church's liturgical year, and have a strategy for developing pupils' knowledge and skills progressively across the school. The resources provided for this school are of an excellent standard, well organised, and accessible to all, and this is prioritised in the budget. The religious education subject leader has worked collaboratively with new teachers to ensure they can understand the requirements of delivering prayer in a Catholic school and investment in resources has ensured a consistency of approach.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	145324
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8233346
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Dunstable Road, Caddington, Luton, LU1 4BB
School phone number	01582602420
Headteacher	Louise Waldram
Chair of Local Governing Body	Colette Donohue
School Website	www.stmarysprimary.org.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non selective
Age-range of pupils	2-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	March 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Kirstie Yuen

Jane Zamora

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