



# **DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT**

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on  
behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

**URN 101814**

**St Mary's Catholic High School**

**Woburn Road**

**West Croydon**

**CR9 2EE**

**Inspection date: 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

**Chair of Governors: Mr Bernard Tomkins**

**Headteacher: Mr Patrick Shields**

**Inspectors: Mr Tom Cahill**

**Mr James Jukes**

## **EDUCATION COMMISSION**

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR  
Tel 01689 829331

**Director of Education: Dr Simon Hughes**



### Key for inspection grades

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

## FULL REPORT



### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's Catholic High School is a voluntary aided school situated in the Croydon Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Croydon Local Authority. The school celebrated its 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary in September 2021. The principal parishes which the school serves are Our Lady of Reparation, West Croydon; St Andrew's, Thornton Heath; St Chad's, South Norwood and The Faithful Virgin, Upper Norwood. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 35%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 .

The school takes pupils from 11 to 16 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 565 making it a smaller than average secondary school. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is significantly below the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 39%, over double the national average, while the number of pupils who receive extra support in class is also significantly above the average. 71% of pupils come from a minority ethnic background with Black African being the largest ethnic group. Approximately 60% of pupils are believed to speak English as an additional language with over 56 languages are spoken at the school.

The school has successfully implemented the recommendations made in the previous inspection in 2015.

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## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Mary's High is a Good Catholic school because:

- Pupils respond positively to the school's strong Catholic ethos and outstanding pastoral care provided to each pupil by the staff of the school.
- Pupils make good progress in Religious Education taking into account their prior attainment on entry to the school.
- Pupils respond positively and respectfully to the many good opportunities for prayer and collective worship provided by the staff.

## WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Leaders and governors should seek to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced subject leader for Religious Education as a matter of urgency.
- Review the provision for Chaplaincy at the school to ensure roles and responsibilities are clear to both staff and pupils.
- Continue to build the confidence of local Catholic families by further developing links with local parishes and Catholic feeder schools in order to highlight the many positive attributes of St Mary's High school.

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## Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.	2
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### Catholic Life

	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	1
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	1

### Religious Education

	2
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	2

### Collective Worship

	2
How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.	2
The quality of provision for Collective Worship.	2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	2

## CATHOLIC LIFE

1

**The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

- Pupils derive great benefit from attending this highly inclusive school where pupils feel safe and secure. There is a clear focus from the leadership team on the preferential treatment of the poor and disadvantaged. The staff positively welcome asylum seekers and children looked after by the local authority. As one pupil said 'Pupils of different backgrounds are welcomed here and we feel safe here'. One pupil who joined the school in Year 9 as an asylum seeker, speaking no English, is now studying at Cambridge University.
- The leadership team fully supports the Common Good and generously provided places for pupils displaced when a local Catholic school was closed at the end of the last academic year. Pupils who transferred from the school said they were made to feel very welcome and every effort was made by staff to ensure they enjoyed the same curriculum offer provided by their previous school.
- The behaviour of the pupils is very good and they respond positively to the high expectations of the staff.
- The good behaviour of pupils contributes to the good learning attitudes of the pupils which together creates a harmonious Catholic community where everyone is respected no matter whatever their background. This in turn supports the clear mission of the school which is to welcome, serve others and work hard.
- The pastoral care provided by the staff to their pupils is outstanding and staff go the extra mile to ensure each individual can flourish at the school. The safeguarding team focuses especially on vulnerable families and the school is proud that 99% of pupils leaving the school in Year 11 are in education, employment or training.
- Staff also provide a very wide range of extracurricular and enrichment activities for pupils. This includes the Year 11 residential trip to Hindleap Warren which was paid for out of school funds to ensure everyone was included. Pupils and staff spoke enthusiastically about the impact of the trip in terms of bonding and wellbeing. In addition, over 50% of pupils are involved in enrichment activities provided by the school, including the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop their leadership skills. There is a flourishing student leadership team and each member has an allocated area of the school on which to provide feedback to pupils and staff. These areas include leadership, teaching and learning and Catholic ethos.
- Staff encourage the pupils to support those less well off than themselves and many charities including CAFOD, the Catholic Children's Society, Cancer Research and Manna Society are supported.
- Parents are positive and supportive of the school and very much appreciate the care provided to the pupils. As one parent wrote 'You can literally feel the love at St Mary's'. Parents are kept fully informed about the Catholic life and events at the school through a weekly bulletin.

**The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is good.**

- Provision for Catholic life has continued to improve since the last inspection and has the capacity to be outstanding as the new chaplaincy provision becomes embedded. At the time of the inspection, a new Chaplaincy coordinator had only recently been confirmed in post. The roles and responsibilities were in the process of being clarified following the departure of the previous Chaplain at the end of the previous academic year.
- The school is distinctly Catholic and there are many beautiful icons and statues in prominent positions around the school including a grotto dedicated to Our Lady in the school grounds. A statue of Our Lady can also be found in all classrooms as a focal point for prayer. The school's mission statement 'St Mary's Catholic High School is a caring community which has Christ at its centre', is displayed around the school and is also printed in the pupils' diaries.
- The school's mission of welcome, service of others and hard work lies at the heart of everything the school does each day. Pupils are reminded regularly of the mission at assemblies and in Form Time.
- Due to the COVID pandemic, there has been no Chapel provision as the school has needed to reorganise the use of space within the school. The school is fully committed to restoring the provision of the Chapel when conditions allow.
- A noteworthy and recent development at the school has been the introduction of the 'Trauma Informed' project. Leaders and governors have encouraged staff to develop their understanding of how past traumas can impact on the behaviour of pupils now. This has been especially useful in a school which genuinely welcomes both refugees and children looked after by the local authorities.
- The appointment of a trained social worker to the role of pastoral manager is also having a very positive effect in supporting vulnerable pupils and families in need which, in turn, contributes to the outstanding pastoral care provided by the staff of the school.
- The Relationships and Sex Education programme offered to all pupils meets the requirements of the Diocese and is based on the TenTen programme.
- Retreat opportunities are limited at present due to the pandemic but should be reviewed once conditions allow.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

- Leaders and governors have a clear vision for the school and an excellent understanding of the purpose of a Catholic school. They are ambitious for the school and are fully committed to maintaining and developing the school's strong Catholic ethos. The opening section of the school development plan features Catholic ethos and the plans and resources being provided to further enhance it.



- Leaders and governors provide time and financial support to encourage staff to study for a Masters in Education in Catholic School Leadership offered by St Mary's University at Twickenham. Ten staff have already been supported to undertake the course. St Mary's University also facilitates the school's annual 'Spiritual Life and Ethos' training day for staff.
- The Chair of governors is experienced and committed and also supports other local Catholic schools. Although there are a number of vacancies on the governing body, there is a clear plan of action to appoint more foundation governors including the local parish priest. This will further enhance school and parish links.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school and attend Masses and assemblies and give feedback to the relevant committees on Catholic Life. They have established a range of appropriate committees to ensure provision for enhancing Catholic Life is at the heart of their work.
- School leaders are working hard to foster even better relationships with the local parish with the intention of strengthening further the Catholic ethos of the school. The school also has strong links with the religious order of the Daughters of The Divine Love who are regular visitors to the school and provide great support to the school staff.
- Leaders and governors have rearranged the whole school mission supported by the Sion Community for later in this academic year as it was postponed in 2021 due to the pandemic.
- The number of Catholic pupils on roll has declined since the last inspection. Leaders and governors should develop strategies which will build the confidence of local Catholic families by highlighting to them the many positive attributes the school has to offer.

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## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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### **How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is good.**

- Pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons as evidenced through interviews and feedback from student voice surveys. They are positive towards the subject and enjoy good relationships with their teachers. In a good Key stage 4 lesson seen during the inspection, the pace of the lesson was brisk and pupils applied themselves diligently and were rarely off task. The teacher ensured they were actively engaged in their learning and pupils made good progress.
- The positive attitudes of pupils are reflected in the care, attention and pride they take in their class books.
- Pupils make good progress in Religious Education taking into account their prior attainment. Their achievement in the subject is broadly in line with other core subjects in the school all of which have been improving since the last inspection.
- Data provided by the school indicates that outcomes continue to improve and that all pupils follow a full GCSE course in Religious Education. The good teaching seen during the inspection and the good work ethic of the pupils indicated that the school data was robust and evidenced appropriately.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good.**

- Religious Education teachers work hard ensuring lessons are planned carefully to meet the needs of all the pupils.
- The quality of teaching is strongest at Key Stage 4, less so at Key Stage 3, reflecting the deployment of experienced teaching staff at Key Stage 4.
- Due to the difficulty of appointing Religious Education teachers the majority of teaching at Key stage 3 is delivered by temporary staff whilst the school seeks to appoint a new subject leader.
- Pupils' work books showed evidence of marking and assessment. However, the quality of assessment across the department was not consistent.
- Teachers use end of topic tests to assess the skills and knowledge learnt and to monitor the progress of each pupil. However more regular guidance on what pupils can do to improve further would be helpful.



**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is good.**

- Since the last inspection, the leadership of the department has lacked stability overall and at the time of this inspection, there was no subject leader in place to lead the department. This has resulted in temporary staff being deployed within the department whilst leaders and managers seek to make a permanent appointment of a subject leader at the earliest opportunity.
- The school has put in place temporary measures to monitor the department but this is not a long-term solution and the lack of a suitably qualified and experienced subject leader is preventing the department from making further progress and ensuring the subject is seen as a top priority core subject.
- Religious Education courses offered by the school comply with the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. The school offers the Edexcel syllabus A GCSE which includes the study of Catholic Christianity, Islam and Philosophy and Ethics. At Key Stage 3, the syllabus follows broadly The Way, The Truth and the Life scheme of work.
- The link governor for Religious Education, who is also the Chair of governors is a regular visitor to the department and knows the strengths and weaknesses of the department very well. Standards in Religious Education are discussed during the termly meeting of the governors Standards Committee.

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## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

**How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good.**

- As the inspection took place during the COVID pandemic, there were clearly restrictions in terms of large group gatherings for collective worship. The school has responded well in providing pupils and staff with access to online resources.
- Pupils respond positively and respectfully to prayer and collective worship provided by the staff. During the inspection, collective worship was either teacher led or prepared mainly by teachers. Pupils would benefit further by having more opportunities to design and lead collective worship whether in Form time or for other forms of liturgy which are offered at the school.

**The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good.**

- Teachers and leaders are excellent role models for the pupils and ensure they have regular opportunities for prayer and worship. Prior to the pandemic, pupils were able to attend Mass regularly and had access to the Oratory style chapel.
- In addition to services for collective worship at Advent, Christmas and Easter, the school organises a welcome Mass for Year 7. This year, the Mass was for Year 7 and Year 8 as the Mass was cancelled the previous year due to the pandemic. Parents felt this was a very positive experience including many who are of other faiths or no faith. Pupils are also provided with opportunities to attend services of reconciliation and the Stations of the Cross.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good.**

- Senior leaders and governors regularly attend acts of collective worship to assess the quality and impact on the pupils. They have ensured pupils continue to have access to good quality collective worship during the pandemic by moving to online resources.
- Leaders have also supported local Catholic feeder schools in leading and organising joint acts of collective worship involving pupils from all the schools which was then shared as an online resource.
- The recent appointment of a part time Chaplaincy coordinator will further enhance the provision and quality of collective worship at the school.