



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 102670

St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Russell Road
Wimbledon
SW19 1QL

Inspection date: 12 June 2013

Chair of Governors:	Mrs F Hibbert
Headteacher:	Miss S Crouch
Inspectors:	Mrs J Lenahan Mrs F Hawkes

EDUCATION COMMISSION

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

Tel 01689 829331 Fax 01689 829255

Director of Education: Dr Anne Bamford

SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St Mary's School is a voluntary aided Catholic primary school, situated close to Wimbledon town centre. It is situated in the Merton deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark and maintained by Merton LA. The school became all-through, one-form entry in September 2007. In September 2011 the school started to become two-form entry and at the time of the inspection has two Reception and two Year 1 classes. The school is oversubscribed. The principal parish, which the school serves, is St Winefride's, Wimbledon (South). Approximately 20% of the school's pupils come from the parishes of Christ the King, Wimbledon Park; St Joseph's, Colliers Wood; Sacred Heart, Wimbledon and St John Fisher, Merton. 98% of pupils are baptised Catholics. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and 10% in Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 3 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 268, plus 51 pupils who attend the nursery part-time. The ethnicity of the intake is diverse with the majority coming from a White British background. The social mix of the school covers a broad spectrum from advantaged to those living in social housing. A higher than average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language, although few are at the early stage of its acquisition. The attainment of pupils on entry is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is in line with national averages and three pupils have special needs statements.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

GRADE

1

St Mary's School is successful in living out its mission with Gospel values and the teaching of the Catholic faith at its core. The school's distinct ethos is all embracing with leaders, Parish Priest and governors committed to its development and implementation. Leaders are excellent role models and are ably assisted by the dedicated staff team that operates with a collegiate nature in offering clear Catholic direction for the pupils. Testament of this commitment to faith development is the manner in which staff members take it in turns to lead the whole school in prayer in the playground at the start of each day. Noteworthy was the manner in which passers by on the public road stood in appreciation of this act of worship.

The school exudes a sense of family, common purpose and the joy of learning. Parents interviewed and responses to questionnaires revealed that they value highly the welcoming atmosphere and sense of belonging to St Mary's. A parent sums up the school's special ethos by citing how much they appreciate "the warmth of welcome at the gate every morning, the amazing dedication of staff, being welcomed as a family to the school community and children being educated in the Catholic faith in a positive, gentle way". The pupils' behaviour is exemplary as they show consideration for their peers, are enthusiastic learners and are proud of their school. The prayer life of the school is outstanding, as pupils are made aware of its significance in the practice of their faith. An outstanding tenet of the school's vision is its commitment to community cohesion and the school rightly judges itself to be inclusive.

The teaching of Religious Education is good overall with the subject leader giving effective leadership in implementing 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' programme, which has been introduced this year.

The Governing Body plays an active role in guiding the school and is an active and supportive presence in the school. Key issues raised in the previous inspection in 2007 have been successfully implemented. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and honest and has rightly identified areas for further development therefore it is well placed to improve even further.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, headteacher and staff should:

- Place monitoring of the curriculum on a more formal basis to raise standards even further across the school.
- Review the teaching of other world faiths so that there is breadth and balance and progression throughout.
- Seek out opportunities to foster closer links with all the parishes the school serves.

The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

GRADE 1

The Headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is ably supported by her leadership team. Together they ensure that the Catholic life of the school is given clear direction and that all members of the school community understand their role in enhancing the Catholic life at the different levels and through a wide range of opportunities for the pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The school benefits from the embedded vision 'To be the best we can be' that is both well communicated across the whole school community and embraced by the pupils.

The effectiveness of the environment that has been created, both indoors and outdoors for the benefit of the pupils, reflects the vision of leaders to provide an educational paradise for exploration and learning through awe, wonder and challenge. Harmonious links exist with parents, school and external agencies, with a focus on offering pupils high quality care, guidance and support, thus ensuring their welfare and security are paramount. The excellent behaviour of the pupils, who are given a clear voice in key areas for development, portrays their ease, sense of respect and confidence as valued members of the school community. The Parish Priest as chaplain and governor makes a significant contribution to the Catholic life of the school and his input is greatly appreciated by staff, pupils and parents. Leaders and Governors share a unity of purpose to build on the school's strengths and drive the school forward. Parents are supportive of the school and express gratitude for the dedication and commitment of leaders and staff. Response from questionnaires highlighted a concern about links with the parishes that the school serves, other than St Winefride's, with 20% of the respondents stating that links with these parishes could be enhanced.

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

GRADE 1

Prayer and collective worship is celebrated through a rich range of personal, class and whole school liturgies, opportunities for reflection, sacramental celebrations, and assemblies. Worship is linked to the liturgical year with one of the two weekly assemblies specifically focusing on the Gospel reading of the week. The impact of the regular support of the Chaplain ensures that meaningful liturgies are an integral aspect of school life. The collective worship witnessed during the inspection was a powerful act of prayer and learning about 'The Power of the Love of God'. This was greatly enhanced by awesomely inspirational singing of the hymn 'Mungu Ni Mwema', which was led by a group of pupils. This musical interlude set the tone for the whole school to engage in listening and participating in the assembly in a gentle, calm and prayerful manner. Exemplary prayer focal areas are a feature in most classrooms, where relevant child-centred icons, Bibles and pupils' work act as an inspiration for prayer. The recent creation of a prayer garden dedicated to Our Lady is a laudable development in supporting the pupils' spiritual journey. Inspectors concluded that devotion to Our Lady, through praying the Rosary, was not given due priority and this should be an area for improvement. Learners demonstrate an awareness of the relevance of prayer. This is evident in their written intercessions and the manner in which they respond with humility and reverence during formal prayer sessions and reflection times, which are aspects of Religious Education lessons. Mass is celebrated at appropriate times during the school year and pupils are actively involved in preparing readings, bidding prayers and serving on the altar. The school is fully committed to supporting the First Eucharist programme, which was church based for the first time this year.

Community cohesion

Community cohesion is an outstanding area in the day to day and termly life of the school. The school is focussed on developing the Catholic community to ensure pupils, parents and staff are given opportunities to understand and actively participate in aspects of family, parish and the wider community. Strong links are forged with the local deanery cluster group and pupils are given opportunities for personal development through this forum, especially with regard to the Ursuline Convent School. The school community demonstrate respect, care, concern and all embracing welcome to one another and the wider community. Visitors are welcomed into the school and treated with the utmost respect by the pupils. The school extends a warm welcome to parents and parishioners to participate in act of worship and share in its corporate life on a on-going basis. Opportunities for participation in local activities are reflected in the Harvest Festival for Wimbledon Guild and link work and support for The Perseid Special School. The parent body feel valued and supported. This is evident in the school's outreach work which incorporates emotional, financial and practical support when needed. Parents from outside the United Kingdom reflect on the inclusive community as one parent stated, "We have no family here in the UK so the school plays this part in our lives". Pupils have the opportunity to take part in a range of fund-raising events to support charities such as NSPCC, CAFOD and HCPT. Members of the School Council and House Captains accept roles of responsibility to serve others and they agree that the school is a happy and caring environment where all are cared for, guided and supported. The stated that they feel valued and that God and the teachings of Jesus are at the centre of school life. The programme to teach pupils understanding and respect about the major world faiths was well established through the 'Here I Am' programme but is less well implemented currently. The school should review the programme to reflect the previous good practice in this area of the curriculum. The school works hard to give its pupils opportunities to gain a knowledge and understanding of the wider community with a range of first hand experiences of community activities. Governors and the Parents' Association support the school in its participation in local community events and exercise their duty to serve the common good.

Publication date: 19 July 2013

Religious Education

GRADE 2

Achievement and standards in Religious Education

The standards achieved in Religious Education are good overall. Attainment is average by the end of Key Stage 1 but by the end of Key Stage 2 there is significant progress and levels are in line with pupils' performance in literacy standards. Learners are gaining knowledge and skills at a good rate and are competent when using Religious Education vocabulary. Their knowledge of the life and teachings of Jesus is good and they are able to reflect on Gospel values and relate learning to the practice of their faith. Year 6 pupils demonstrate good ability when undertaking self-reflection at the end of topics through 'What I Know' exercises. These reflections give an insight into what they have learnt in relation to doctrine and the study of scripture. This excellent practice in self-assessment should be emulated throughout the school. In the Reception class pupils were keen to share their knowledge about the life of Jesus and can relate life in God's family to their own family and how Jesus invites us into His community. In the main, pupils take pride in their written assignments, as seen in their workbooks and on displays around the school. Scrutiny of books and discussion with the subject leader revealed that there is a need for more rigorous monitoring to ensure that work is differentiated to a greater extent to challenge the more able and that there is more consistency in standards of attainment, particularly in Key Stage 1.

Pupils' behaviour in class is exemplary as they are focused, interested and eager to express their ideas. Pupils' work in books is well presented overall. In some classes there are inconsistencies in presentation and written work does not match the spiritual dimension of the topic. Examples of exemplary workbooks are a feature of the Year 6 class and this high standard should be emulated throughout, as it is obvious that they take pride in their work. Teaching assistants are very well deployed and give excellent support so that pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

GRADE 2

Classrooms are very well managed with vibrant displays, which reflect participation by the pupils. Public areas also reflect and celebrate the range of curriculum delivery and the pupils' engagement. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good overall with some outstanding elements in a few classes. Where there were outstanding elements, pace was lively, thinking was skilfully challenged and pupils could engage through role-play, discussion and consolidation through time for reflection as witnessed in Year 3 where pupils learned about the parable of The Good Samaritan. Teachers use a range of questioning skills to relate to previous learning and challenge thinking, as witnessed in the Year 2 class where focused questions prior to reflection time assisted pupils in formulating prayers of thankfulness relating to SRE and community. Music is used effectively in lessons to bring an element of serenity to reflection time as seen in Year 5 when pupils considered the question of what it means to be a Christian. Very effective use of ICT to enhance learning was seen in all lessons.

Lessons plans convey clear learning intentions as outlined in the scheme of work and teachers refer to these regularly and effectively to maintain focus. Inspectors felt that over reliance on the scheme meant that lessons were too prescriptive and detracted from pupils' learning, especially hindering the more able when it came to exploring the theme independently.

The marking policy of "3 ticks" is observed throughout and in most cases teachers give affirmative feedback with comments on how to improve but there is no interaction from the pupils. The school policy to reflect developmental marking would help pupils to

engage further in their learning.

Opportunities for spiritual and moral development are integral to teaching and learning and a strength of lessons.

The Religious Education curriculum

GRADE 2

The Religious Education curriculum fulfils the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' programme of study was introduced this academic year and the implementation of its impact on teaching and learning is under termly review by leaders and management. The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of liturgical events interspersed throughout the year, amongst which are the Nativity play, Carol Service in church and the Easter Pageant. The weekly assembly's reflection on the Sunday Gospel allows pupils to reflect on Christ's teaching and how it impacts on their daily lives. Cross-curricular links are used effectively to enhance learning with literacy skills, use of ICT, Bible research skills, role-play, drama, music and hymn singing all making significant contributions to pupils' learning. This wealth of opportunities promoted through the Religious Education scheme in tandem with liturgical celebrations, cross-curricular links and the enrichment programme all serve to support the pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Scrutiny of time-tables need to be reviewed as in most classes it was difficult to ascertain the exact allocation of 10% for Religious Education lessons and how they dovetailed with overlapping areas such as class liturgies, Circle time and SRE lessons. Of further concern was the allocation of the subject to long blocks of time, sometimes covering a whole afternoon.

The programme for SRE has been reviewed since the previous inspection and its implementation is effectively embedded.

The programme to teach pupils about the major world faiths is currently under scrutiny. Although a programme is being delivered in a few classes, the school is aware that it needs to review provision in line with previous practice where there was a systematic programme for all classes which gave pupils access to first hand practitioners of the faiths studied.

Leadership and management of Religious Education

GRADE 2

Leadership of the subject is strongly focused on the school's Catholic mission. As a member of the senior leadership team, the coordinator works in close partnership with the headteacher and brings a vibrant sense of ownership, commitment and belief to the role. He is also ably supported by the Chaplain and the highly talented music specialist. This comprehensive, experienced and dedicated team ensure that Religious Education is given its due status as a core subject.

The subject leader has included monitoring of Religious Education in his schedule in the form of learning walks and book scrutiny. This approach now needs to be more systematic and formal, focusing on supporting colleagues to improve lesson plans that include differentiation to meet the needs and abilities of all pupils and overseeing the raising of standards and levels of attainment, especially in Key Stage 1.

The in-school training programme, which is led by the subject leader to support staff in implementing the newly introduced scheme of work, needs to be on-going as inspectors

ascertained from discussions with staff their need for further training. Inspectors also identified that documentation relating to Religious Education, liturgies and prayer life of the school does not reflect all the wonderful attributes of St Marys' as a Catholic school and this needs to be addressed.

Assessment procedures are developing well and there is on-going tracking of pupils' levels of attainment. The moderation of pupils' work is at the early stage of development and the subject leader aspires to undertake this work within the deanery cluster group in the forthcoming year. On completion, this will assist in raising standards further.

Resources for teaching the subject are of a very high quality and the school is very grateful to the local parish for its generous contribution in funding educational materials to support the pupils learning.

Publication date ... 19 July 2013