



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 102994

St Mary's Catholic Junior School
Shorts Road
Carshalton
Surrey
SM5 2PB

Inspection date: 23 September 2013

Chair of Governors:	Mr B Tomkins
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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

The school is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Sutton Deanery of the Diocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Sutton Local Authority. The principal parishes which the school serves are Our Lady of the Rosary Sutton, Holy Cross Carshalton, Holy Family Sutton Green and St. Margaret's Carshalton Beeches. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic has risen and is now 100%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10%.

The school takes pupils from seven to eleven years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 264. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly in line with average expectations. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Around 13% of the pupils receive extra support in class. The vast majority of pupils come from a white British or Irish background. The remaining 14% of pupils comprises mainly of black African, black Caribbean and Indian heritage groups. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is low, with just 8% of pupils having a first language other than English.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1 Outstanding
Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Requires improvement
Grade 4 Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school in providing Catholic Education

GRADE

1

St Mary's was graded as outstanding at the time of its last inspection and continues to be so. It is a highly effective, distinctly Catholic school that places equal value on academic achievement and the pupils' personal faith development. It strongly recognises the individuality of 'faith journey' in a caring, nurturing Catholic community that embraces all pupils. As soon as you enter the school the strong Catholic ethos is clearly evident. The school has a coherent sense of mission and purpose. The drive to develop the whole child and to nurture individual worth is embedded in school culture. Pupils are encouraged to strive for excellence in all areas of their academic and personal development. They, in response, learn to respect all members of the community as equally valuable. Very strong liaison with parents and the four parishes the school serves further nourishes this provision and the school continues to strive to build and improve on the effectiveness of these links. The key to the school's ongoing success is the strength of leadership. The headteacher gives outstanding direction to staff and pupils as she nurtures and empowers them to give of their very best. The school's high quality leadership team in turn shares and disseminates the school's clear vision creating a common sense of purpose among the community as a whole. They provide excellent role models and are given, along with all staff, a wide range of development opportunities to which the school gives a high priority. Governors are passionate about the ongoing development of the Catholic ethos of the school providing both support and challenge when discussing priorities for improvement. All leaders work together to secure outstanding provision for the care, guidance and support of pupils. Relationships are excellent and pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Numerous opportunities for personal and collective worship result in the pupils' spiritual and moral development being outstanding. Pupils make good progress because of a well-planned curriculum that includes film, 'sacred art', music and artefacts. It meets their differing needs while consistently excellent teaching also challenges their thinking. This is underpinned by effective systems for assessing pupils' attainment. It is commendable how the whole school community works together to develop and maximise opportunities for the benefit of all pupils and the school community as a whole. It is noteworthy that with an over 50% questionnaire return, 100% were positive. As one parent responded on their questionnaire, *'St Mary's provides our children with a wonderful sense of spirituality which spans across all religions. We are proud of the teaching that the school, our community family and ourselves contribute to our children. The school undoubtedly provides a Catholic education'*.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Having addressed the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection the school, to its credit, continues to have no significant areas for improvement. It has a strong capacity to maintain, improve and develop, largely as a result of comprehensive and accurate self-evaluation that the inspectors have been able to validate. There is a shared vision with regard to next steps, supported by good evidence of effective monitoring of teaching, learning and provision for prayer and collective worship. There is a strong sense of purpose and drive and an ability to move the school on in a culture of continuous lifelong learning for all.

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- Continue to use its rigorous self-evaluation procedures to secure yet further improvement
- Work towards their aim to achieve Level 1 accreditation for UNICEF

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

The governors, headteacher and leadership team are aware of the importance of promoting pupil contributions to the life of the school. This is done exceptionally well focussing on the good of the local and global community. The school has positive practices that support integration and work to educate pupils towards a society where there is a common vision and a sense of belonging. Pupils are also taught that the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances are equally valued and the school's very good MLE site provides useful community internet links e.g. Missio. The school builds opportunities to explore the common values of other faiths in the overall Religious Education programme and for pupils to share their cultural richness so that they can grow up with respect for others and their beliefs. Pupils are encouraged to recognise commonality and respect differences and as a result are proud of their backgrounds and beliefs and have a strong sense of personal worth.

Pupil voice within the school is strong and through the School Council pupils are able to influence school practice. They welcome opportunities to examine matters and where possible influence them. There is a strong bond with the local community through Home-School-Parish links which is a rich resource for education for diversity. Celebrations and marking events like Black History Month and Holocaust Memorial Day consolidate learning and build confidence in pupils. Year 6 have nurtured a strong bond with members of Sutton Synagogue and make annual exchange visits. Teaching in these aspects looks at how Christ engaged with people on the margins of society and pupils are encouraged to draw parallels with their own society and encourage tolerance and acceptance so that peace and justice are central to their lives.

As a result of excellent teaching pupils have a high level of religious literacy from which they are able to build moral reasoning. Artefacts and resources of other faiths are available to staff and pupils and these are respectfully displayed around the school or in classrooms at appropriate times. Pupils are also taught that all people are equal and therefore we should treat everyone with respect. This includes others on the playground as well as people of other countries, faith, interests and so on with pupils explicitly putting into practice what they have learned. Teachers have confidence in engaging with diversity issues and often link teaching to PHSE and Citizenship. Central to the school's ethos and teaching is the fostering of good relationships so that it becomes a community that cannot only tolerate difference but also engage difference to search out the true worth of every individual, for example Year 6 work on stereotyping and other SEAL topics. The school maintains a balance between local, national and international charitable projects to support people in challenging situations. The school actively encourages pupils to contribute to the community by publicly recognising and celebrating their contributions in each class and at whole school assemblies. Pupils expressed much enjoyment in contributing to community events such as sports competitions, carol singing at the local Library and Sutton Town Centre projects and competitions.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

There is an ongoing drive for high standards in Religious Education so that each pupil gains the maximum from the teaching and learning processes to which they are exposed.

The Religious Education coordinator ensures curriculum coverage by promoting the agreed Religious Education programme of work of "Come and See" and previously 'Here I Am' to ensure continuity and progression across the school. The programme is supported with additional resources to provide a curriculum that is progressive and rich in experiences for the pupils.

Whilst pupils enter the school at Year 3 with above average attainment this is very successfully built on through a challenging and engaging curriculum that sees pupils build successfully on these levels year on year. This is achieved as a result of high quality focused teaching that sets above age related expectations across the school. Clear structures and consistency of approach throughout Key Stage 2 mark the outstanding nature of this school. Learning is enhanced by the pupils' keenness and commitment to succeed and their ability to grasp opportunities to extend and improve their learning. High levels of self-motivation are evident reflecting the confidence inculcated by teachers in their pupils. The school's tracking over time shows there are no significant variations between groups of pupils and by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are comfortable using appropriate language to describe their religious understanding and are able to articulate their Catholic beliefs. They are confident in discussing their views and offering their opinions. Personal growth is strong within the school because pupils are given frequent opportunities to make choices and distinguish between right and wrong. The quality of moral development is best reflected in the relationships within the school.

Social and cultural development is linked to the principles of 'Every Child Matters' and is a strength within the school. It is evident in all school systems e.g. Year 3/Year 6 buddies, prefect systems, Creativity Day etc. Pupil behaviour throughout the school is exemplary and any very occasional incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with sensitively with the onus being on how to improve. This is linked to the learning culture of the school, with thinking maps and hats being used to resolve issues and get pupils to reflect and take responsibility for their actions.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

The school more than fulfils its statutory obligations with regard to worship. Prayer and worship are very strong and integral to the life of the school. Liturgical celebrations are exceptionally well planned and this is evidenced by pupils' reflections on these celebrations and their ability to apply aspects of them to their own lives. The programme includes assemblies, prayer in classes, at meal times, within Religious Education lessons and other opportunities including Masses, Monday Liturgy and other services.

Pupils have daily experiences of both formal and informal prayer and are able to be reflective and reverent at these times.

Worship is co-ordinated through themes and with a focus on the liturgical calendar, Religious Education scheme of work and school focus. This ensures that worship is planned for and centrally placed within the school, based upon gathering together, listening, responding and going forth. These reflect the ethos of the school and help develop the pupils' spirituality and moral sense. Worship and liturgical messages are delivered in a lively, interesting and prayerful way and where possible are interactive, for example reflection time in assembly or choosing and making up own prayers in class with pupils supplying the music for assemblies. This ensures pupils are engaged as learners and sets the appropriate atmosphere for the start of prayer sessions. It includes displays, candles, "sacred art", music and other stimuli which are used in areas for worship in order

to help all participants to focus on a topic. For example, each class brings a candle to school assemblies to show participation and belonging. Music is an essential part of the liturgical life of the school and 25% of the music curriculum is used to develop this aspect. As a result pupils enjoy singing and participate well in worship. Opportunities are provided for private worship around the school but particularly in classrooms where there is a prayer corner/focus area which pupils are encouraged to use to enhance their own spiritual life. During Lent a central area is designated for private prayer and reflection and is well used by pupils. They also have access to a school Memory Book, Faith Club and Rosary meetings in May and October. This is appropriate for the ages and abilities of the pupils who often take the lead in planning and leading worship so that it becomes central to their lives.

Sacramental preparation is carried out by each of the parishes but is supported by the school, the curriculum, two Penitential Services in school and visits by teachers and headteacher to parishes for First Holy Communion Mass in school. This significant commitment on their part serves to enhance the prayer life of the school and Home-School-Parish links. Parents are invited to special events, assemblies, Services and Masses which keep them involved, contributing to the prayer life of the school by attendance and also by being given key roles at these events. The Wednesday Word has been purchased by the school for all families as preparation for Mass. This was a new initiative to promote Year of Faith. An area of the school grounds has been made into a memorial garden in memory of deceased family and friends providing an appropriate reflective area on the school site.

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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

Leadership and management at all levels at St Mary's are outstanding and show a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education which has a positive impact on the personal development and wellbeing of the whole school community and gives priority to the pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The headteacher is an inspirational leader with a clear vision of Catholic education which shapes direction for the school. Her style of leadership encourages a strong culture of collaboration and ensures her vision is shared by all members of the school community. She is strongly supported by her deputy head and members of the management team. As one parent wrote, *"The headteacher's strong ethical leadership is shown in her vision and commitment to Catholic education empowering our children in their Faith and Values. This gives the children a real sense of identity and personal dignity."* The governors are proactive in regularly monitoring the Catholic ethos of the school through visits, attendance at acts of worship and school celebrations and by being in continual constructive dialogue. They are integral to the management of the school and the promotion of Gospel values which underpin the daily lives of staff and pupils. There is an appointed governor with responsibility for Religious Education, who monitors on an annual basis and meets regularly with the Religious Education coordinator and as an experienced governor has an excellent understanding of his role in challenging the school to improve.

There is an effective monitoring programme that ensures class teaching is monitored on at least an annual basis by the Religious Education coordinator and senior leaders. Teachers are informed of their own strengths and areas for development and an overall report is drawn up so that good practice is shared across the school. Teachers' planning, assessment and book trawls are carried out on a termly basis informing future action. The Religious Education coordinator works with the senior leadership team to ensure CPD opportunities are available to all staff and is an integral part of performance management for leaders. The Religious Education coordinator has taken charge of the assessment procedures for this curriculum area ensuring consistent application of the policy across the school in line with other subjects. This has resulted in teachers having a very good understanding of levels of attainment.

Parents recorded their appreciation for the termly Religious Education newsletters which go to families and which parents acknowledged helped them to support their children in Religious Education. Likewise the introduction of the weekly 'Wednesday word' has been welcomed as one parent stated, "... this brings together the working between the school and the local parishes in a way that is age relevant as well as starting a dialogue between children and parents".

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

St Mary's is an exceptionally well led school reflecting the cohesiveness and commonality of purpose between leaders, governors and managers. They all have an appropriate strategic place in the school's management structure in which they work very effectively. The headteacher is empowered to manage the school. She did hold the role of Religious

Education subject leader until Autumn 2012 but the role has now appropriately passed on to another member of staff who has attended training provided by the Education Commission, reflecting the school's commitment and staff access to appropriate CPD.

The headteacher has a clear vision evidenced in different forms of communication including documentation that gives great importance to promoting a positive culture for learning. The report from Section 5 Ofsted highlights the drive for high standards with effective teaching and learning throughout the school. The Senior Leadership and Middle Leader teams meet regularly to consolidate the work of the teams with consistent leadership time provision. They have a shared vision for the school and are committed to school improvement by achieving high standards in all that they undertake. The governing body is well informed which means it fulfils its role well in relation to the school's Catholic foundation and are therefore able to provide excellent support and challenge to the headteacher and school leadership team. Governors are committed, enthusiastic and dedicated. They bring their own expertise to the school and these skills are carefully deployed. The work of the Governing Body is highly effective, supporting the work done by the school. Governors understand their roles within the structure. They welcome and seek information in order to provide challenge. A new committee has been formed this year to monitor processes involved with children, families and community. This sits and is chaired jointly with St Mary's Nursery and Infants' School. Fr Paul has specific responsibility to oversee the development of Religious Education and is a regular visitor to the school. When possible governors are invited to jointly observe lessons during the monitoring process. The Senior Leadership Team takes corporate responsibility for the life of the school, paying particular attention to the Religious life of the school. Its members share and promote good practice in all they undertake and strongly contribute to the positive culture for learning within the school. They also take a leading role in the delivery of collective worship. The views of parents are actively sought and valued within an atmosphere of trust and respect.

There is an effective School Council. Pupils feel they make a difference and give the example that they reported some slippery stairs which have now been repaired and improved. They described their school as very special as it is a *'telling school'* where they can go to someone if they have a problem and *'our teachers value and support everyone'*. They said they could not think of anything to improve their school as it is good as it is and they felt lucky to be there. The staff are, *"really generous, you always have something to look forward to. The school is Holy and that is good thing because we know more about Jesus."*

There are excellent links with the Diocese. The headteacher regularly attends Diocesan briefings and headteacher meetings including the annual conference. The school has hosted Diocesan Governor Briefings.

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

The Religious Education curriculum meets the 10% requirement as laid down in Diocesan guidelines. The majority of teaching seen was outstanding with none less than good. The teaching team has great strength and subject expertise. The school places high value on Religious Education in-service training which has contributed to the high standards of teaching and materials in the school. Teachers use the 'Come and See' scheme, supplemented by elements of the previous scheme, 'Here I Am'. It is used imaginatively and supplemented by a range of teaching methods and resources. Teaching is consistently outstanding reflecting the excellent planning and preparation that goes into lessons. Lessons are all marked by strong teacher subject knowledge, developing cross curricular links, excellent pace and teachers' intuitive use of a range of teaching strategies. Class management is a strength of the school as is consistency of approach across all year groups. Lessons benefit from teachers' use of open-ended questioning and affirmation of all pupil responses.

In one lesson seen on the story of Ruth, pupils were fully engaged throughout the lesson. High levels of challenge saw strong development of Religious Education vocabulary and a range of differentiated tasks to meet the needs of all pupils, from pictorial ordering of pictures to retell a story, to the creation of a litany that encourages us to follow Ruth's example. In a further lesson on ingredients for a loving family, links between scripture and the pupils' lives provided considerable relevance. The teacher created an atmosphere of fellowship and camaraderie that engendered much sharing and productive learning. Towards the end of the lesson the teacher reflected on the concept of ingredients by sharing with the pupils a fresh cake which reflected a rainbow. The regular use of drama, various forms of writing, ICT, talk partners, and class discussion reflect a high level of cross curricular links. Lessons are well planned and delivered with challenge and good pace with above age related expectations being consistently set.

In two lessons seen on the topic of unique God given gifts, good links were made with scripture and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In one of these lessons the teacher, through her own spirituality, drew out in pupils a strong understanding of the relevance of scripture in their daily lives. This lesson was also marked by the teacher's clarity of response to pupil questions, making good use of opportunities to develop cross curricular links and better serve the development of higher ability learners. A Year 6 lesson was well supported by teacher's strong spirituality. The pupils were encouraged to focus on the emotions generated by characters in the parable of 'The Prodigal Son' which they did very successfully. The parable was well used to deepen pupil understanding of the Sacrament of Reconciliation through role play.

The lesson was enhanced by subject links, particularly Art, which saw pupils expressing a deep knowledge of the artists' intentions. Pupils are able to work independently and collaboratively; learning is consolidated in plenary sessions and assessment informs both planning and learning. Teachers have excellent classroom management skills and set high expectations to which pupils respond positively by demonstrating a keenness to give of their best. The development of Religious Education vocabulary in the context of wider cross curricular links with literacy is particularly strong. There is a very clear and consistent approach to marking in Religious Education, matching that in other subjects. Developmental marking is well established, being consistently used throughout the school. Pupil responses are well considered and support their learning. Assessment is very well developed. Teaching in Religious Education is vigorously monitored on an annual basis

and is consistently found to be good or better. The high quality of teaching impacts directly on the children's learning and contributes to the very good progress they make. The use of Thinking Skills has impacted positively on pupils' learning, particularly in Religious Education, which lends itself to this approach and evidence can be found in pupil workbooks. On-going assessment is used to inform planning and move children's learning forward to meet the challenges set in the school's Religious Education programme. Pupils are aware of their next steps to achieve a higher level. Assessment in Religious Education is recorded in line with the whole school assessment policy and practice. It has been a key focus since the last inspection in line with the school's priorities and changes to Diocesan policy and practice. School-based evidence shows that this is contributing to raising standards in Religious Education. The behaviour of pupils in lessons is such to create a purposeful learning environment. They demonstrate considerable maturity in relationships with adults and their peers. They are friendly articulate and proud of their school. Religious Education workbooks across the school stand out as 'special' and the pupils treasure them in this way. They are tastefully decorated with work being well presented and of good quality. Pupils are proud of their work which they are keen to share at every opportunity.

Parents are informed and involved in the Religious Education of their children and this is welcomed positively by the school, as parents are recognised as the first educators of their children.

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

Everyone at St Mary's Juniors is valued as an individual. The school provides an innovative curriculum that supports and promotes pupils' learning, is inclusive and capable of responding to the needs of all pupils. They are encouraged to maximise their learning opportunities within a curriculum that relates to their own life experiences. This reflects the 'Every Child Matters' agenda building on the experiences pupils bring from home.

Pupils are motivated and enthusiastic about their learning in Religious Education and this is evidenced in enthusiastic responses and the high standards attained at the end of Key Stage 2.

Pupils' workbooks are clearly special to them. The curriculum is greatly enriched by a variety of special events, visitors and visits. There is a culture where it is 'OK' to be wrong and to make mistakes as part of the learning process, which has led to good attitudes to learning where all views are respected. There are clearly defined support mechanisms in place that are used consistently leading to peer relationships that are appropriate and secure.

Very good PSHE and Citizenship links assist the process of meeting the needs of all learners. Enrichment activities, Religious Education focused visits and visitors to the school with subject specific objectives boost the interest of all.

The school's provision for EPR is embedded and able to support individual needs. Opportunities for pupils to help specific projects (local and international) provide a rich source of motivation. Spiritual and moral development is integrated into all aspects of school life and impacts on all pupils' development.

Year 3 Literacy work in the autumn term culminates in the writing of their own Nativity Play that becomes the annual Christmas Production.

The curriculum is driven by an excellent subject coordinator who is enthusiastic about all aspects of her role. She supports staff well. Her documentation is exceptionally well ordered and presented.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

Collective worship at St Mary's is of a very high order giving pupils truly meaningful experiences of liturgy. This can be attributed to the school's attention to the integration and planning of such celebrations. Staff give positive witness to pupils by attending and leading collective worship including assemblies, services and Masses. The quality of provision for pupils at whole school assemblies, services and so on is outstanding due to leaders' different strengths and pupil participation through personal involvement. In the Monday liturgy attended, led by the headteacher, pupils entered the hall with great reverence. Good use was made of a focal point of candles and a powerpoint presentation to create a reflective atmosphere on the topic of 'Choice' linked to the Gospel of the day. The celebration was supported by beautiful singing by the pupils, notably of the Gospel acclamation. Thoughtful questions were posed for pupils to take back to their classrooms with a 'bank note' representing a 'richness in love'. Classroom focal points are of an exceptionally high standard. They are interactive and well used by pupils who value the opportunities they provide for prayer intentions. Display work round the school is equally outstanding demonstrating the high level of thought and care given to all aspects of school life. Pupils have inputted into the beautiful hall display representing each child in a circle round Mary. Pupils are very knowledgeable about the school's Patron Saint and their team saints. The school motto "God is at the centre of everything", is lived out in all the school does. The Parish Priest is a regular visitor to the school. The pupils greatly appreciate their informal meetings with him on the playground and the liturgical celebrations he leads. He has a strong pastoral role in school which is valued by the whole school community, as is his advisory role in his capacity as a Governor of the school.

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