



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for
St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 143631

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham, on:

Date: 29 September 2022

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	2
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.....	2
Religious education (p.5) The quality of curriculum religious education.....	2
Collective worship (p.7) The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....	2
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	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- Secure in their understanding of being made in God's image and the responsibilities this entails, pupils enthusiastically meet the school's high expectations surrounding behaviour, making them happy and confident at school.
- Leaders and staff have established an authentic, warm, and proactive culture of welcome. Consequently, there are genuine Christ-centred interactions at every level.
- Much work has been done to develop the school's expression of its Catholic identity through its physical environment, heightening pupils' understanding of what it means to be a Catholic school.

- Pupils clearly articulate the link between religion and their everyday lives because of a school-wide focus on religious literacy.
- The head teacher models the highest of standards during prayer, which sets an excellent bar for staff to meet and inspires the pupils in joyful singing, which always comes from their hearts.

What the school needs to improve

- Enable more pupils to participate in Catholic life and mission evaluation and subsequent improvement planning.
- Ensure all religious education lessons are planned and linked to pupils' current assessment so that they all learn well.
- Review the prayer and liturgy policy to be fit for purpose and helpful to staff when preparing acts of worship.

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:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2



Pupils understand the school's mission through its strapline, 'One family united in Christ to be the best we can be'. Pupils speak confidently about the need to show kindness and compassion towards one another because we are all made in God's image. This is reinforced by the excellent work being led by the multi-academy company (MAC) on Catholic Social Teaching, which enables pupils to discuss complex themes, such as solidarity and dignity, in age-appropriate ways. This inspires pupils into action beyond the classroom, as demonstrated in recent activities, such as fundraising for Myton Hospice. Consequently, pupils are committed to following Jesus' example and living out gospel values, contributing to their moral development. For example, some parents told inspectors that their children asked exploratory questions at home, such as 'Would God ever come and talk to me?' and 'What would God tell me to do?' after reflecting on the life of Moses. Pupils engage with chaplaincy provision through the Mini Vinnies programme and the eco group. Although 25% of the school population have joined the Mini Vinnies, who are also fundraising to replace the school's Bible stock, many pupils are not part of it, limiting the engagement with chaplaincy activity to those who choose to participate.

Staff are exemplary role models committed to living out the school's mission. They have developed a warm, inclusive culture of welcome permeating the school that extends to all community members, including those beyond the school gates; for example, making a quilt for a child displaced by the conflict in Ukraine who was not a pupil at the time. Staff further nurture a palpable sense of family by making a determined effort to know all pupils and being visible disciples of Christ in their attitudes and behaviours. Subsequently, they offer supportive pastoral care, contributing to pupils' happiness and well-being. Much work has been

undertaken to improve the school's physical environment. Thanks to the vision of the head teacher, and financial support from the MAC, it is now decorated with statues, prayer focus areas, Stations of the Cross, and other religious artefacts which faithfully express its Catholic identity. Opportunities for staff's spiritual and moral development are limited, which leaders have acknowledged and have plans to address this year. Following a recent review, the school is implementing a new relationship, sex, and health education programme, though it is too soon to evaluate its impact on pupils' learning.

Leaders and governors are acutely aware that the school's role in parish life, resulting in a strengthening bond between the school and parish over the last two years. The parish priest, parishioners, and parents cherish opportunities for pupils' involvement in the parish's harvest project and Christmas celebrations. The head teacher's vision has transformed the school. Because of this and her understanding of its service to the parish, extra effort is made to include parish children, who do not attend St Mary's, in sacramental preparation arrangements. High regard is paid to staff's well-being; they value the approachability of school leaders, who offer good pastoral care. Similar care is given to the physical well-being of leaders by MAC directors. Pupils' involvement in evaluating Catholic life and mission is currently limited to those who hold leadership roles in school, and processes for gathering their views are not formalised; consequently, they are not empowered to lead improvements to this area of school life. Catholic life and mission are core priorities for local governors, who are involved in monitoring activities. Their evaluation of these, however, does not align with the school's improvement plans.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

2

Pupils attain well in religious education, with strong outcomes throughout school. Because the school has responded well to previous areas for development, pupils use religious vocabulary accurately and confidently. This contributes to their reflections on learning, asking thoughtful questions, and showing their awareness of the relationship between religion and their lived experiences. However, because teachers do not consider the range of ages and levels of maturity in the mixed-age classes, pupils' progress does not always match that planned for the curriculum. That said, all pupils engage and behave well in lessons because they want to know more and do more and enjoy striving to do so; consequently, concentration is good during lessons. Self-assessment sheets are used consistently for pupils to understand how well they are doing in terms of new knowledge acquired and the key questions they ponder. Still, they are not yet used to assess against intended learning outcomes, meaning pupils cannot identify the gaps in their learning. Presentation of work is good and comparable to work in other core subjects, though there is limited evidence of individuality because all pupils ordinarily complete the same tasks.

Almost all teachers' subject knowledge is secure, meaning they teach confidently; where this is not the case, leaders have put support in place. Religious education is central to the school's mission, with teachers effectively communicating the subject's importance to pupils. However, some pupils are not making sufficient progress in religious education, and their learning is limited; this is mainly the case in mixed-age classes and for higher attaining pupils in all classes. Teachers do ask good questions briskly, making activities exciting, though not all teachers and their assistants use pupils' responses to adapt teaching strategies to meet their needs. Teachers are skilled in creating moments for reflection in religious education, with the subject

contributing significantly to pupils' moral and spiritual development. Pupils speak eloquently about what they've learned in religious education. Teachers routinely and consistently praise pupils during lessons, further motivating them. A range of teaching activities is used to inspire pupils. However, teachers do not always provide opportunities to engage directly with the Bible, missing opportunities to develop their Bible skills. Because teachers' feedback frequently focuses on praise and affirmation, their comments make little difference to pupils' understanding of how to make progress in their learning.

Leaders and governors ensure that provision complies with the Archbishop's requirements. As part of this, the subject is resourced equitably compared to other core subjects. At least the required amount of curriculum time is allocated to religious education in every classroom. Leaders provide continuing professional development (CPD) to all staff regarding expectations and assessment, specifically focusing on teaching pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, demonstrating leaders' commitment to the most vulnerable. Religious education is led by the head teacher, who, due to recent restructuring, has recently started to share this responsibility. A clear vision for the subject ensures its high status within the school and teaching that is usually at least consistently good, although pace and challenge need to be improved throughout the school. The MAC provides excellent support to the school, assisting it in accountability and monitoring standards. Regular, well-planned meetings help leaders identify and address areas for development. Consequently, the accuracy of leaders' self-evaluation is good. There are few opportunities to engage in enrichment activities to support their religious education learning.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

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

2

Leadership

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

2



Pupils' response to prayer is good; they are reverent, respectful, and can reflect during extended periods of silence. The pupils' singing is particularly impressive, full of joy due to how the head teacher models it. Pupils use many prayer styles, including traditional, contemporary, sung, and spontaneous prayers. Because prayer is part of the daily rhythm of school life, pupils are confident when participating. Pupils can talk about the liturgical year and how praying influences their lives. Routines for pupil-led prayer are well established and used consistently. Pupils are involved in evaluating the prayers and liturgies they plan through pupil voice exercises. Pupils use these views to select ways of praying that appeal to their peers and maintain interest and enthusiasm. Although pupils lead prayer services, the prayers they use are frequently written by staff. Pupils desire to write their own prayers more regularly so that they 'can share God with our friends'.

Prayer and liturgy are central to school life; they form part of all school gatherings and celebrations; as a result, prayer is a natural daily feature. Scripture is always used during times of prayer; passages chosen are always liturgically relevant and in keeping with the Church's liturgical year, reinforcing pupils' awareness of the school's placement within the universal Church. At St Mary's, it is normal for pupils to pray about the focus of their learning; for example, praying for solidarity when studying 'The Day the War Came'. All staff are committed to providing a rich prayer life; as such, they are good role models to which pupils aspire. This is because staff model appropriate gestures and confidently join in with responses. Creativity features in prayer: music, art and drama are used fittingly to enhance the experience for all, including parents who are deeply appreciative of the opportunities to join in. A liturgy group

involving parents harnesses the chance for pupils to undertake liturgical ministries in the parish. During extended times of prayer in the classroom, teachers sometimes punctuate prayer with question-answer sessions, turning prayer into a mini religious education lesson.

Leaders and governors ensure the school's timetable is built around opportunities for Mass; class Masses are prioritised, together with whole school celebrations on all Holy Days of Obligation that occur within term time. Sometimes, if the parish priest's availability is restricted, the school joins the parish in these celebrations virtually. The CPD programmes provided by the school and the MAC include training opportunities on leading prayer and liturgy, and staff also engage in diocesan training sessions; however, there are currently limited options for staff to undertake liturgical formation. Whilst the school has a 'Collective Worship Policy', it is not comprehensive. It only has a limited impact on the work of staff, as it does not detail the school's expectations surrounding prayer or how their provision will be monitored. Leaders and governors are aware of the need to map out the different levels of participation in worship that are reflective of the age and capacity of pupils and have a vision of what this currently looks like at St Mary's, but are yet to formalise this. The head teacher is an excellent role model of prayer for her staff and pupils because she demonstrates the highest standards, but staff are not yet monitored to achieve the same high standard. Governors regularly monitor and evaluate prayer and liturgy through visits, observations, and prayer focus area audits; consequently, they know the school's strengths and areas for development.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	143631
Full postal address of the school	Arden Road, Henley-in-Arden, B95 5LT
School phone number	01564 792 316
Name of head teacher or principal	Charlotte Miller
Chair of governing board	Yvonne Brennan
School Website	www.stmaryshenley.warwickshire.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Our Lady of the Magnificat Catholic MAC
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	February 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Ben McArdle	Lead inspector
Geraldine McCauley	Team inspector

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