



St Mary's RC Primary School

Pemberton Road, Blackhill, Consett, County Durham, DH8 8JD

School Unique Reference Number: **114248**

Inspection dates:	17 – 18 October 2019
Lead inspector:	Mary Tate

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Religious Education:		Good	2
Collective Worship:		Outstanding	1

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Mary's RC Primary School is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- It is a warm and welcoming school community where everyone works together and is valued and cared for. Staff, parents and governors are united in their vision for the school. The mission and ethos of Catholic education permeates all aspects of school life.
- The Catholic Life of St Mary's is outstanding because the spiritual well-being and inclusive ethos is at the heart of all its work.
- The quality of Collective Worship at St Mary's is outstanding and is central to the life of the school. Staff and leaders model high quality and varied acts of worship. Pupils are guided to lead quality acts of worship with increasing independence.
- The quality of Religious Education is good. Pupils enjoy Religious Education, can explain its value and are keen to do well, leading to good progress in most lessons. Behaviour is exemplary.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Mary's is an average sized primary school serving the parishes of Our Lady Immaculate, Blackhill and Our Lady of the Rosary, Shotley Bridge.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with both special educational needs and those with an Educational Health Care Plan is below average.
- Most pupils are of white British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- Pupils join the school in reception class from a wide variety of early years settings.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Improve the quality of Religious Education by:
 - embedding the best practice across the school to ensure that good progress is planned for all groups of pupils
 - continue to develop assessment systems so that all staff develop confidence in making accurate judgements about pupils' attainment and progress enabling them to plan for the next steps in learning.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

1

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

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

- The mission statement, 'Pray well, work well', is central to the life of St Mary's. It was created in partnership by pupils, staff and governors and is embraced by all. The Catholic inclusive ethos permeates all aspects of the school's work.
- Parents, staff and governors are proud of their school with its inclusive ethos. Parents speak of the school as a place where children are taught to show love to one another. One parent commented that, 'the school provides a strong foundation for children, they feel valued and they in turn value, and look after each other'.
- Pupils are aware of their responsibility to care for the needs of those who are less fortunate than themselves. They speak proudly about their charitable work such as supporting the local foodbank and a range of charities, including CAFOD and Samaritan's Purse. Each class in the school supports a child in India, contributing towards their education and well-being.
- Pupils are happy and confident in their own stage of spiritual development. They are proud of the religious identity of their school. They show a very good understanding of the Church's liturgical year and its key celebrations.
- The close partnership between school and parish supports pupils' spiritual development. The Religious Education coordinator and chair of governors are members of the parish council. The parish priest is actively involved in the life of the school and plays a central role in strengthening this community of faith.
- Pupils demonstrate high standards of behaviour and care; they show kindness towards each other and enjoy celebrating the successes of their friends.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding and is given the highest priority by staff and governors at St Mary's. The Catholic character is visible around the school through displays, prayer areas in classes and focal points around the corridors.
- Leaders, staff, pupils, parents and governors are fully committed to developing and delivering the school mission across the school community with energy and enthusiasm.
- Excellent relationships exist within the school community. Parents are supportive of the

school and speak about a caring atmosphere where everyone is equally valued. Pupils talked of how new members of the school community are welcomed as friends.

- The school prayer room provides a place for quiet prayer and reflection. Pupils are enthusiastic about the new prayer garden being created in school.
- St Mary's has an active Mini-Vinnies group which is true to its motto of 'turning concern into action'. The group talks with pride about its many charitable ventures and its recent cake sale for the Rainbow Trust.
- Clear policies and procedures are in place, which are rooted in Gospel Values. They provide high levels of support for pupils, staff and the wider community.
- The Relationships and Sex Education programme is well established and delivered effectively, at age appropriate levels, following the diocesan model 'Journey in Love'.

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

- The headteacher, Religious Education coordinator and governors share an understanding and vision of Catholic education and are committed to making the Catholic Life of St Mary's the best it can be.
- Leaders see the monitoring and evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school as a continual process and are highly ambitious for all children. The leadership team members are excellent role models for all staff and are motivated and excited about the journey the school is on. Self-evaluation is accurate and has led to well targeted, planned developments and improvements for the Catholic Life of St Mary's.
- The school engages extremely well with parents and carers to the great benefit of all its pupils and families. Parents are supportive of the work of the school and its mission. On a recent questionnaire to parents, one parent commented that, 'the school promotes strong values and gives pupils a real sense of belonging'.
- Governors make a good contribution to the Catholic Life of the school. They are highly visible members of the community and are proactive by their attendance at school events and services. They discharge their duties effectively and offer challenge, as well as support, to ensure further development.
- Staff feel very well supported and feel valued. They share a common purpose and one member of staff described the strengths of the school as being an inclusive community with a shared vision, where every day is seen as a fresh start.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

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

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

- Pupils enjoy and understand the value of Religious Education, demonstrating enthusiasm and commitment to their learning. Behaviour for learning is very good. One pupil spoke about how they enjoy learning about scripture in a variety of ways.
- Outcomes for pupils at St Mary's are very good overall. Most pupils are making good progress in Religious Education within lessons and over time. They are developing their knowledge and understanding well.
- Support staff are deployed effectively to support individuals and groups of children.
- The creative approach to Religious Education is a strength of the school. Pupil books are always very well presented and reflect the pupils' desire to do their best. Teachers' feedback to pupils impacts positively on progress and ensures pupils are clear about how well they are achieving in Religious Education. However, tasks are not sufficiently differentiated to cater for the range of needs between pupils and promote maximum rates of progress.
- Parents speak positively about Religious Education and feel well informed about their child's progress. One parent commented that they see, 'Religious Education as varied and overarching yet linked to pupils' real-life experiences'. Children enjoy telling their parents about what they are learning at school.

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

- Teachers have a clear understanding of the value of Religious Education, evident in the quantity and quality of work in pupils' books. The creative approach to Religious Education is evident in pupils' books and is a strength of St Mary's.
- Teachers adopt a creative approach to their teaching which involves drama, role play and partner work. During the inspection, one class were highly engaged in a 'conscience alley', where they were reflecting on the thoughts and feelings of characters in the story of the Prodigal Son.
- Pupils concentrate well in lessons and teachers have high expectations of behaviour for learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and are a real strength of the school.
- Effective assessment procedures are embedded into Religious Education which inform the

teacher about pupils' prior attainment. However, the results of these are not applied consistently to inform planning. In some lessons tasks are not always sufficiently matched to pupils' abilities to engage all groups of learners or to enable them to work independently.

- Marking and feedback is consistent across the school and helps pupils to know how well they are achieving.
- Staff work together to share good practice and they support each other in moderating standards of work both in school, and within in the local cluster of schools. They are developing the confidence to make accurate judgements in assessing pupils' work within the new diocesan framework for age related expectations.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding.

- The leadership of Religious Education at St Mary's is outstanding. The deputy headteacher is the curriculum leader and, together with the headteacher, shares a clear vision and commitment to improve teaching and learning across the school. They inspire staff, pupils and parents to share in their vision to achieve the highest outcomes.
- The school has worked on the new 'assessment without levels' approach to the curriculum for two terms, and has developed a school-based strategy to assist staff with judging pupils' attainment and progress.
- The experienced Religious Education coordinator attends diocesan network meetings and supports teaching and learning by leading continuing professional development (CPD) and organising shared moderation exercises.
- A range of monitoring exercises ensures the provision for Religious Education is evaluated regularly. Clear and coherent priorities for development enables leaders to ensure very good outcomes for pupils.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the curriculum and are kept informed of developments in Religious Education within the school. They are extremely supportive but also confident in their ability to challenge. They discharge their statutory and canonical duties well.
- Sacramental preparation is given a high priority and is fully embedded in the Religious Education curriculum; it is of high quality and in line with diocesan guidelines. It is highly valued by parents and pupils.
- The curriculum, based on Come and See, enables pupils to gain quality experiences of the liturgical life of the Catholic church. It has a high profile in St Mary's and is well planned to provide a range of interesting activities for pupils. The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship is outstanding.

- St Mary's is a prayerful community and Collective Worship is at the heart of school life. Varied opportunities engage the interest of all pupils and they participate with reverence and respect, joining in with prayers and singing with joy.
- Pupils gain confidence in planning and leading Collective Worship in class and they know what constitutes the various elements of Collective Worship. They talk enthusiastically about leading acts of worship and relish the opportunity to do so. One parent commented that pupils feel proud of their liturgies and enjoy planning together.
- Collective Worship contributes positively to the spiritual and moral development of all pupils. St Mary's works in partnership with the parish and parents, who speak positively about feeling included and welcomed at services and Masses.
- Creative Prayer is a strength of the school and the twice weekly reflections are enjoyed by all pupils, which enhances their spiritual development. Adults provide excellent role models for pupils in their response and participation in Collective Worship.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of the church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts. From the earliest age, pupils recognise the special nature of liturgical symbols and show respect. They are aware that religious beliefs are important, demonstrating respect for their own faith and the faith of others.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Collective Worship is central to the daily life of St Mary's and makes a significant contribution to the moral and spiritual needs of pupils. From their earliest days, pupils are taught how to create an atmosphere for prayer and praying together is a key part of the daily experience for staff and pupils.
- Acts of Collective Worship have a clear message and purpose. They are planned around themes in the Church's year and used to encourage pupils to develop their understanding and to care for others. Creative prayer offers pupils an opportunity to reflect on themes in a variety of forms.
- Adults model high quality liturgies for pupils which contributes significantly to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. They help pupils to develop the skills and confidence

required to plan and lead acts of Collective Worship.

- There is a strong partnership between home, school and parish. Parents, parishioners and governors are given opportunities to share in the spiritual life of the school through assemblies and liturgies, seasonal celebrations and Mass in the parish church. Each fortnight members of the parish lead the whole school in Open the Book, when they bring a Bible passage to life through music, drama and reflection.
- Prayer areas in classes, and displays throughout the school, are well resourced and provide a central focus for prayer and reflection. The school prayer room is a dedicated sacred space and is used regularly for prayer and reflection.
- There is a clear policy for Collective Worship at St Mary's which ensures a clear sense of purpose.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are highly visible leaders of Collective Worship within St Mary's. They are positive role models for both staff and pupils and have expert knowledge on how to plan and deliver high quality Collective Worship.
- The quality of Collective Worship is monitored and evaluated carefully as part of school self-evaluation. Leaders review Collective Worship throughout the school on a regular basis. Clear priorities for development are highlighted on a section of the school improvement plan.
- Leaders regularly seek the views of parents and staff. The responses are valued, and the school uses all of the feedback it collects to continually improve Collective Worship experiences for the whole community.
- Staff support each other and work together to bring about further improvement. They have a shared sense of direction and one member of staff commented that, 'everyone works as part of a team at St Mary's'.
- The professional development needs of staff are identified and supported through a well-planned programme of professional development. Leaders ensure that all staff take part in diocesan, cluster, and in-house training to support them in their spiritual and liturgical understanding. Staff are encouraged to participate in the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.
- Effective partnership ensures that all governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for further development in Collective Worship.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have excellent sacramental preparation, working closely with the parish priest and catechists.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

HOW EFFECTIVE THE SCHOOL IS IN PROVIDING CATHOLIC EDUCATION:**1****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.

1

How well leaders and managers 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 and assessment in Religious Education.

2

How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**1**

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

1

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

1

SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Mary's RC Primary School
Unique reference number	114248
Local authority	Durham
This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt Reverend Robert Byrne the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle under canon 806 of Canon Law. For voluntary aided schools it also fulfils the responsibility the governing body has to inspect the school under s48 of the Education Act 2005.	
Chair of governors	Mrs Michelle Harris
Headteacher	Mr David Miller
Date of previous school inspection	January 2015
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