



St Mary's RC Primary School

Meadowside, Thornholme Road, Sunderland, SR2 7QN

School Unique Reference Number: **108840**

Inspection dates:	28 – 29 January 2014
Lead inspector:	Karen Holmes
Team inspector:	Carolyn Duffy

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Collective Worship:		Outstanding	1
Religious Education:		Good	2

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

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

- St Mary's is a very warm, welcoming and vibrant school where everyone shares the headteacher's clear vision. The mission and ethos of Catholic education is at the heart of this faith community.
- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding because the well-being and personal and spiritual development of pupils and staff underpin all that the school does. Pupils are actively involved in a range of activities which support their community contributing significantly to their moral, social and emotional development.
- The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding. Worship is central to the life of the school and pupils, guided by skilled staff, demonstrate the skills necessary to deliver high quality acts of worship.
- The quality of Religious Education is good and the areas for development since the last inspection have been addressed. It is not yet outstanding due to inconsistencies across the school in the quality of teaching and marking.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Mary's is a larger than average primary school serving the parishes of St Mary's, Bridge Street and St Cecilia's and St Patrick's, Ryhope Road.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2012 and there have been a number of staffing changes since the last inspection three years ago.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average.
- Almost all pupils come from a white British background.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is below average.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- The school needs to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - Ensuring that all teachers have a secure knowledge of attainment in each level in Religious Education
 - Providing the correct level of challenge to enable pupils to access tasks independently
 - Ensuring that pupils are consistently given the time they need to respond to feedback in marking
 - Sharing good practice of teaching and marking to ensure consistency across classes and year groups.

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.

- Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic Life of the school and benefit greatly from it. Pupils have a deep sense of belonging to their 'school family' and parents comment that 'St Mary's offers a nurturing environment centred around the Catholic family'.
- Pupils wholeheartedly appreciate, value and participate in the Catholic Life of the school with the mission statement of 'Growing, loving and learning in the arms of Mary' embraced as a living document. The Catholic ethos is tangible throughout the school.
- Pupils evaluate their input into the Catholic Life and the impact of their actions on their community on a regular basis. Pupils have a strong voice in the decision making process, they say they feel valued and confidently express their ideas and feelings.
- Pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of the importance of how they live their lives and how they treat others, recognising that respect has to be earned and valued. Pupils are happy, confident and secure in their own stage of spiritual growth, demonstrating exemplary behaviour towards adults and each other.
- Pupils are at the heart of school celebrations and, through strong parish links, pupils are able to extend their relationship with the local community, using the nearby convent for weekly Mass.
- Pupils willingly and eagerly take on positions of responsibility and leadership within the school and the wider community, organising a varied assortment of fundraising opportunities to benefit others. Pupils confidently talk about the various causes they support, effectively promoting the Catholic character of the school when they recycle clothes and use their entrepreneurial skills to raise funds for the NSPCC.
- Pupils are clearly supported throughout school by a range of pastoral care from caring adults. All staff play their part and everyone is valued for their contribution. The weekly pastoral groups provide opportunities for pupils of all ages to 'look out for each other' and share concerns.

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

- The Catholic values of the school are given the highest priority and are embedded in the daily life of the school where parents feel that 'children are absorbed in God's love'. The mission statement is a vital part of school life at St Mary's which all parts of the community have played a part in shaping.

- Excellent relationships now exist within the school community with all stakeholders fully committed to making the school the best that it can be. Staff, governors, parents and pupils are all encouraged to be involved in school life and communication is now seen as a strength of the school.
- The school is a very prayerful community where all members of the community feel welcomed. Parents comment that 'the school offers a warm welcome to all, no matter what faith is worshipped'. There is a strong sense of family and parents take advantage of the many opportunities to worship and pray with their children.
- St Mary's is a school committed to Catholic tradition and ethos. The Catholic character of the school is evident in the creative displays and sacred spaces prominently featured around the school.
- Clear policies and procedures are now in place which are carefully planned to reflect the Catholic Life of the school for both pupils and staff. They provide high levels of support for pupils, staff and the wider community. There is an explicit commitment to the most vulnerable and needy with regular fundraising and food collections.
- The Relationships and Sex Education programme (RSE) is well established and delivered effectively at age appropriate levels following the diocesan model.
- The behaviour of pupils in and around the school is exemplary: personal responsibility is encouraged through a culture of respect, praise, rewards and choices, whilst encouraging reconciliation.

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

- Leaders and managers throughout the school are instrumental in ensuring that the church's mission in education is lived and breathed by all connected with the school. They have a very clear understanding of the vision of Catholic education and role of the Catholic school in the mission of the church.
- Leaders are highly ambitious for all children of the school. The headteacher, Religious Education coordinator and parish priest are excellent role models for all staff and are motivated and enthusiastic about the journey that the school is on.
- The school has developed very successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers who now have a clear understanding of the school's mission. They feel that the Catholic ethos is now very strong and feel that 'St Mary's genuinely works in partnership with parents to create a lovely warm atmosphere where the Roman Catholic faith can be fostered'.
- The Catholic Life of the school is monitored by all stakeholders on a regular basis to inform priorities and evaluate success. Governors are confident in holding the leadership team to account whilst being actively involved in supporting its mission. They have an excellent grasp of the challenges faced by the school and work very effectively with the headteacher.
- The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate, gathered from a range of sources. It has clear links to the school development plan and is focused on improvements for pupils' outcomes.
- High quality performance management and support systems, as well as well-matched continuing professional development opportunities are provided. The spirituality of staff is a priority and opportunities for the spiritual development of all staff are provided through daily prayer and annual retreats.

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 very prayerful and spiritual school where worship is a regular and meaningful part of the day. All pupils are inspired by, and enthusiastic in, their response to Collective Worship. This is evident in their keen participation in liturgies, particularly their gathering, joyful singing and prayerful reflection. They listen intently, show respect and offer heartfelt responses.
- Pupils take an increasing lead in planning, preparing and leading liturgies in class and larger groups throughout the school. They are very confident in using resources and are developing a wide variety of prayer and liturgical styles which they use appropriately.
- From the earliest ages 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.
- Adults provide excellent role models for pupils in their response and participation in liturgy and this is evident when pupils lead their own liturgies.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Prayer and acts of Collective Worship are given the highest priority and have become a key part of every day, and every school celebration, providing inspiration for staff and pupils.
- There is a clear policy for Collective Worship and a good range of structures to ensure that it is frequent, regular and inclusive. Collective Worship has a very clear structure and purpose and there are a variety of opportunities for staff and pupils to pray together.
- Collective Worship is carefully planned and resourced using 'statements to live by' and the liturgical year. Pupils and adults praying together is a daily experience with parents and other adults welcomed into this prayerful community.
- Adults are passionate about ensuring that Collective Worship is of the highest quality and take every opportunity to model high quality liturgies: themes chosen reflect a deep understanding of the liturgical year.
- Traditions such as the Rosary have a very high profile in the school. Pupils were involved in designing their own rosaries using natural materials. Families are increasingly involved through weekly circulation of the Wednesday Word, the travelling cribs during Advent and Lenten bags.
- Parents, parishioners and governors are given further opportunities to share in the spiritual life of the school through various acts of Collective Worship, celebrations and weekly class Mass at the convent.

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

- The headteacher has set a very high standard for Collective Worship in school. She leads by example, ensuring that pupils and staff develop a deepening appreciation of the church's traditions, seasons, rites and symbols and that prayerful, reflective opportunities contribute to the spiritual formation of pupils and staff.
- Both the headteacher and Religious Education coordinator are passionate that liturgical and spiritual development are priorities for all in school and that time is devoted to this. This was evident in the staff retreat day and the opportunities offered to pupils to visit the Youth Village.
- The Religious Education coordinator has a very visible presence in school and a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in Collective Worship through both formal and informal monitoring. Effective evaluation of staff strengths has resulted in an effective professional development programme for all staff and appropriate performance management targets.
- Leaders regularly seek the views of parents and staff. The responses are highly valued and lead to further developments.

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.

- Almost all pupils enjoy and understand the value of Religious Education, demonstrating passion and commitment in their learning. Behaviour in lessons is good with the majority of pupils concentrating well and displaying very positive attitudes to their learning.
- Pupils make good progress across a range of skills and are developing well in their knowledge and understanding. They demonstrate excellent prior knowledge and are able to use this well in their new learning.
- Outcomes for pupils are good overall. From below average starting points in the early years foundation stage pupils make good progress through key stage one. Good progress continues throughout key stage two and books evidence a good standard of work, although there are inconsistencies across age groups and classes.
- Inspection findings and evidence presented by the school shows no notable differences between groups of learners. Pupils identified as having special educational needs make good progress because of the quality of targeted support from skilled staff.
- Due to the state of transition in level expectations across all diocesan schools, the current averages for attainment and progress are not reliable benchmarks. Therefore no judgement will be made in this report against diocesan averages for either attainment or progress.

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

- Teaching is mainly good with some examples of outstanding teaching. In the best lessons pupils are set challenging tasks which are well matched to their learning needs and which successfully engage all pupils. Teachers demonstrate high expectations of behaviour and engagement and, as a result, pupils concentrate well.
- In some lessons tasks are not always sufficiently well matched to the learning objective to promote good learning. Activities are not always sufficiently matched to pupils' abilities to engage all groups of learners or to enable them to work independently.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and are a real strength of the school. Support staff are used effectively to reinforce learning and to support and extend pupils of different abilities.
- Assessments are regular and the school has developed a rigorous tracking system. However levelling of pupils' work is not always accurate as teachers are not confident with levels of attainment in Religious Education.
- Teachers use diocesan plans and guidance to deliver well planned activities through a range

of teaching strategies which help pupils to develop and extend their knowledge and foster curiosity and enthusiasm.

- Teachers make good use of time to maximise learning and develop a range of skills interpreting signs and symbols, asking significant questions and engaging with religious ideas; for example recognising the symbolism of the food on the Seder plate in their work on Judaism.
- The standard of marking and feedback varies. There are some excellent examples of focussed marking, however written comments by teachers on steps to improve learning are not used consistently throughout the school. Where they do exist, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to respond to teacher comments in order to enhance learning.

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

- The headteacher demonstrates and shares a highly ambitious vision for the school and for what every pupil and teacher can achieve. She inspires and supports the whole school community.
- Leaders use a range of monitoring activities to regularly check on the quality of teaching and, as a result, have a very accurate picture of the strengths and areas for development. Clear steps for improvement are detailed in the school development plan.
- The commitment and leadership of the Religious Education coordinator who is both knowledgeable and efficient has had a significant impact on raising standards. Consequently teaching and learning is improving at a rapid rate.
- All aspects of Religious Education are evaluated regularly and all staff are kept very well informed about the priorities in Religious Education. Leaders and managers use their findings effectively to promote improvement.
- The Religious Education curriculum is rich and varied providing a range of interesting activities and imaginative teaching to foster engagement and enable all pupils to make good progress in their learning. The Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- Sacramental policy is delivered well and in accordance with diocesan policy. There are strong links with the parish and catechists speak very proudly and positively about their work with the pupils.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school and are routinely involved in a range of monitoring and evaluation activities. They are extremely supportive but also confident in their ability to challenge. They discharge their statutory and canonical duties well.

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

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

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

SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Mary's RC Primary School
Unique reference number	108840
Local authority	Sunderland
This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Séamus Cunningham the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese, (c.f. Code Canon Law, 804, 806), and for the Governing Body of the school (Education Act 2005, Section 48). The inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.	
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