

# DIOCESE OF MIDDLESBROUGH

Inspection of Religious Education  
Collective Worship  
and  
The Catholic Life of the School



**School:** St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy  
Part of St Oswald's Multi Academy Trust

**Address:** Tennyson Avenue,  
Grangetown,  
Middlesbrough  
TS6 7AD

**URN:** 140779

**Head of School:** Mrs Chris Ruddy

**Chair:** Mr Harry Gallacher

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018

**Inspector:** Anne Parr  
Mark Ryan

**Date & Grade of Last Inspection:** March 2013

**Grade:** Good

**Overall Grade for this Inspection:** Good

A Report from:  
The Diocese of Middlesbrough Schools' Service  
Section 48 Inspection Team  
50a The Avenue  
Linthorpe  
Middlesbrough TS5 6QT

# INTRODUCTION

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Bishop of Middlesbrough (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school. The Inspection reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school's witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation. The Inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers.

## What Inspection Grades mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding Catholic school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a Catholic school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	These features, though of adequate quality, require improvement to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate Catholic school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils.

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's School is part of the St Oswald's Catholic Academy Trust.

St Mary's is an average sized Primary School serving an area of significant social and economic deprivation where unemployment is well above that seen nationally and opportunities locally are limited.

The proportion of children eligible for support through Pupil Premium is significantly higher than national. The deprivation indicator is also significantly higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is lower than the national average. Two children have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and one other child is currently going through the EHCP process.

The large majority of pupils are White British with a very small minority from other ethnic groups. The number of pupils learning English as an additional language is well below average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

- Inspectors observed 8 Religious Education (RE) lessons
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the senior leadership team, chair of governors, parish priest, the RE subject leader, pupils' Mini-Vinnies group and a group of parents
- Scrutiny of work from all year groups including discussions with year two, year four and year six teachers

- Observation of four class-based Acts of Collective Worship and whole-school Collective Worship
- Scrutiny of a range of documentation including: plans for improvement, Diocesan School Self-Evaluation Document, monitoring records, records of Collective Worship, RE co-ordinator's files, progress and tracking data,
- Discussions with pupils throughout the two days
- Observations of displays and sacred spaces

### **Pupil Catchment:**

Number of pupils on roll: 227

Planned Admission Number of Pupils: 30

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 60%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian Denominations: 25%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 1%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 8% (6%- no information)

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 20%

### **Teaching Staff:**

Full-time Teachers: 9

Part-time Teachers: 2

Percentage of Catholic Teachers: 27%

### **Support Staff:**

Full-time Classroom Support Staff: 14

Part-time Classroom Support Staff: 1

Percentage of Catholic Classroom Support Staff: 57%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 9%

### **Percentage of learning time given to R.E:**

All classes: 10%

**Parishes served by the School:** St Andrew's, St Anne's, St Peter's

# 1. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

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## MAIN FINDINGS

St Mary's is a good Catholic school.

The whole staff work hard to benefit all pupils and also their families. The headteacher leads a team who have a sense of mission to improve outcomes for pupils through the good Catholic character of the school, good pastoral care and a good academic education. Relationships are good at all levels within school and with the wider community. Consequently, pupils and parents alike speak warmly of the school community. Parents speak of how it is 'held in high regard locally'. One parent said that the school meant that 'my children are proud to be Catholic'. It is welcoming and supportive to parents from all backgrounds and beliefs.

The school puts a high priority on the practical, emotional and spiritual support it provides to aid pupils' development and learning. There is a clear sense that the school's mission statement 'Live, love and learn with the guidance of God' is lived out in school. This has a clear impact on the academic achievement and personal and spiritual development of the pupils.

Outcomes for pupils are good. Pupils generally enjoy and understand the importance of RE. They show interest and some engagement in the large majority of lessons. Progress and attainment for most pupils is good. The quality of Collective Worship is good and well organised by those who are responsible for chaplaincy provision. Pupils engage and respond well to a variety of Collective Worship; they participate respectfully in presiding and praying. Their joyful and whole-hearted singing is especially noticeable.

Provision for RE has a high priority and the teaching of RE is good. It engages pupils and enables them to make progress in some classes but this is not consistent across the school. Teachers generally have appropriate subject knowledge. They benefit from the support of the relatively recently appointed RE co-ordinator; especially appreciative are Newly Qualified Teachers and those classroom teachers from backgrounds other than Catholic.

The good Catholic Life of the school is apparent in its parish links, in the charitable activities and opportunity for prayer which reflect the Catholic character of the school. Leaders, managers and governors have developed Catholic Life effectively. Pupils are involved and active in the Catholic Life of the school. St Mary's is a force for good in the Grangetown community

### **What the school needs to do to improve further:**

#### **Improve the teaching of RE across the whole school by:**

- developing a more innovative and creative approach to improve outcomes and engagement for pupils
- ensuring all teachers integrate 'driver words' into LO and refer to them in marking and feedback
- making greater use of diocesan Continued Professional Development and opportunities available at cluster level

#### **Improve monitoring and planning for improvements in RE by:**

- providing the newly-appointed RE co-ordinator with Continued Professional Development and management time to consolidate and develop her role

**Improve governance by:**

- appointing a full Local Management Board
- monitoring improvement plans systematically

## 2. PUPILS

### How good outcomes are for pupils, taking into account variations between groups

Pupils participate constructively in the Catholic Life of the school and understand their own responsibility for it at a level which is age-appropriate. There is an active Mini-Vinnies group which meets regularly to discuss and devise activities to develop the Catholic nature of the school. Other pupils have roles as School Council leaders, buddies, lunchtime monitors, house-captains and sports leaders. Pupils appreciate that school is a safe place where everyone is valued and learns to consider and look after each other. To promote this, the school makes good use of the 'Statements of Belief' in its Monday assembly which is followed through during the week and shared with parents. Pupils talk positively about prayer in school and how the school helps them to develop their faith and 'learn more about Jesus'; they understand the importance of religious belief. Pupils know that they should help others and they participate in charitable activities; for example, for the Catholic Agency For Overseas Development, for 'Mission Together' and local Christmas hamper-making. Through the many beautiful displays and religious artefacts, pupils learn to show respect for the religious objects around them. All sacred spaces and displays are well cared-for and reflect the liturgical year which the children experience. The well-resourced Prayer Space in the hall gives groups of pupils the opportunity to reflect and pray together.

From low entry points with low Communication and Language skills and low levels of Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED), by the end of key stage two (KS2) pupils' achievement in RE is good. Most groups of pupils make good progress so that by the end of key stage one they are beginning to be religiously literate and by the end of key stage two they have knowledge, understanding and skills appropriate to their age which are in line with diocesan expectations. However, progress is not consistent over time across the year groups. It is inconsistent in two key stage two classes: SEND pupils make progress over time because of classroom support but most other pupils are 'coasting', particularly the more able.

Most teachers plan for effective deployment of teaching assistants who support pupils with additional needs so that they make progress. There are some isolated examples of poor behaviour for learning in year five which hinder achievement but these are generally being managed. Behaviour for learning is good and pupils enjoy their RE lessons. Almost all pupils show enjoyment of RE and many spoke enthusiastically about their work. Most pupils work at a good rate and with interest during their lessons. Where teachers use a variety of teaching strategies, pupils' levels of enthusiasm and engagement are very obvious: the year six teacher began with a personal story and through careful questioning, effective use of scripture and a well-planned, carefully constructed lesson, she enabled the class to debate and make a written personal response articulating feelings and experiences on the theme of 'Witnesses'.

Pupils are involved in Collective Worship in regular classroom liturgies, in other groupings and in whole-school liturgies. They enter, participate and leave all Collective Worship areas with great respect and reverence. Older pupils take the lead in preparing and presiding at the 'Wednesday Word' Collective Worship. It is clearly a well-established and familiar part of the school's prayer life in which all engage. The music and singing create a joyful experience for all. Upper key stage two pupils could articulate how thinking and praying during Collective Worship helps them to lead better lives by loving others. With the guidance of class teachers, most pupils are learning to use the 'Gather, Word, Response and Mission' format at a level suited to their age in class liturgies. The year two class made voluntary responses to the

'Wednesday Word' scripture about how to 'grow as part of the vine'. Even the very youngest pupils in school showed a good level of energetic response through the use of a musical mantra 'Thank-you God', enthusiastically encouraged by the teacher.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school</li></ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education</li></ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How well do pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship</li></ul>	<b>2</b>

### 3. PROVISION

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#### How effective the provision is for Catholic education

The provision for Catholic education is good.

The majority of teaching ensures that pupils make progress within lessons and over time. In almost all classrooms pupils engage well and learning is purposeful. In the best classrooms the quality of teaching and planned activities, keeps pupils interested in their learning. This good practice is not consistent across the whole school. Differentiation is mostly by outcome and support; where tasks have been differentiated, it is easier for different groups of pupils to achieve their best. There is sometimes insufficient challenge for higher ability pupils. Teachers, including those other than Catholic, have sufficient subject knowledge and confidence to engage pupils. The year six teacher demonstrated high expectations and cross-curricular links to Literacy where pupils made clear links in their own lives to the scripture studied. Good questioning and a well-focused learning objective resulted in all pupils being engaged and able to work very independently. In year two the teacher made good use of a range of resources and teaching strategies. Learning objectives were clear and pupils worked enthusiastically. Although staff make use of levels of attainment, the use of success criteria based around driver words to fine-tune pupils' understanding of expectations is not consistent. Therefore, in some classes, marking is not always effective in providing meaningful targets and comments to help pupils make the most progress they possibly can. There are effective systems to record and track outcomes for pupils; most teachers can demonstrate and articulate progress for a range of pupils. 'Working Walls' and 'Big Questions' support pupils in their learning and make use of a variety of sources. The school has been working hard to teach RE creatively using a variety of strategies; there has been a focus on pupils' personal response to what they have been learning about and how this impacts on their own lives. As a result, in some classes enjoyment and enthusiasm is high.

The RE curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. Coverage in pupils' books reflects the time and emphasis school places on the teaching of RE.

All pupils in school, especially the most vulnerable, benefit from the range of social, emotional and pastoral care provided to improve their spiritual, moral and academic development beyond the statutory RE curriculum. Pupils, sometimes from low starting points, are able to achieve appropriately. Parents and carers speak highly of this and of how the head teacher and staff know the pupils and their families really well. 'Problems are solved and worked out'. Standards of behaviour are high; through RE and Collective Worship, pupils know what is right and wrong and they know that it is important to care for those around them.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is good. The level of engagement amongst pupils is high. Staff also meet for regular Morning Prayer. Pupils are often touchingly serious, reverent and sincere in their actions and responses. The prayer-life and Collective Worship provided by the school is varied; it reflects the Catholic character of the school and the Liturgical year. Similarly, hall and classroom displays encourage and reflect a range of prayer methods and styles. A core group of knowledgeable and skilled staff make good use of a range of resources and music. The school has had plans for some time to create an outside Sacred Space which would provide a wider range of opportunities for pupils. This has not yet happened.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>

## 4. LEADERS, MANAGERS AND GOVERNORS

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### How effective leaders, managers and governors are in developing the Catholic life of the school

The school's leadership demonstrate a clear commitment to the mission of the Church; a day for pupils, staff and Local Management Board (LMB) at the start of each school year reviews the school's mission statement to re-focus on its mission in the community it serves. Consequently, staff and pupils have a high regard for the Catholic Life of the school. The head teacher, RE co-ordinator and LMB work alongside each other to evaluate provision, plan for improvements and build on existing strengths. They know what the next key areas for development are for Catholic Life and Collective Worship, based on their knowledge of the school

The systematic monitoring by governors of plans for improvements has been hampered by difficulties in recruiting suitable governors to fill vacancies in the Local Management Board since the creation of the Academy Trust. Additionally, some sections of existing plans are not clearly thought-out and are therefore difficult to monitor effectively; even so, leaders and managers do bring about some improvements which governors can identify.

Remaining governors have a strong sense of responsibility for the Catholic Life of the school and take an active part in it; they are influential in its direction. They are regularly in school. They visit lessons, attend school liturgies and Masses and meet with the Leadership Team to challenge and question based on the headteacher's termly reports to the LMB. The parish priest as chaplain and governor speaks of the Catholic Life of the school as 'impressive' and of how pupils engage well in the rich prayer-life of the school. Leaders, managers and governors know that effective pastoral care and guidance for many of its pupils has an impact on outcomes for them; this is planned for at St Mary's. It means that pupils benefit socially, emotionally and spiritually from the Catholic Life of the school and are able to achieve in RE. Outcomes for pupils are improving. Induction of new staff is in place and is provided by the head teacher and RE co-ordinator; only limited use is made of diocesan Continued Professional Development (CPD) for teachers and the subject leader.

The RE co-ordinator carries out a range of monitoring activities including work scrutiny and lesson observations. Monitoring has had impact on the majority of teachers' practice and on pupils' progress; the majority of teachers use driver words purposefully and provide some appropriate feedback. This is not yet consistent in all classes in KS2 and requires further support and challenge from school leaders. Progress and attainment data is tracked on a termly basis and some moderation of work takes place across the academy trust. The RE co-ordinator's monitoring overview correctly identifies progress against RE improvement priorities; further actions to achieve them are identified. Leaders act upon how provision and outcomes need improving. Staff speak well of the support they receive in school, particularly concerning assessment in RE and at the start of a new RE topic. They receive valuable one to one support from the RE co-ordinator.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How well leaders, managers and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school, including collective worship, and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils</li></ul>	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How well leaders, managers and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils</li></ul>	2