

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 401501

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Cardiff

13–14 March 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

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

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

2

What the school does well

- St Mary's provides a strong Catholic community from which all pupils benefit academically, spiritually and socially.
- Each child is welcomed and valued equally and they exhibit a strong sense of belonging.
- Leaders and governors are passionate about their work and they are very committed to developing St Mary's to be the best Catholic school that it can be.

What the school needs to improve

- Address the variability that is evident in the quality of teaching.
- Increase the ambition of planning in order to raise opportunities to promote pupils' independence and creativity, particularly for those with the potential to attain at levels significantly above average.

- Develop a stronger partnership with the parish in order to enhance the Catholic life of the school and collective 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

Pupil outcomes

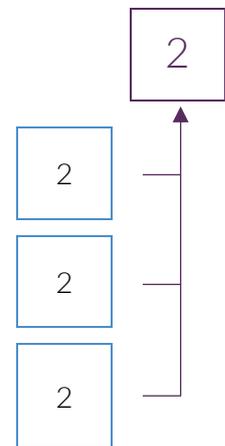
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Pupils at St Mary's have a good understanding of the Catholic nature of the school and they are proud to be a part of it. They take an active role in the life of the school and most pupils feel happy and secure within the environment provided. They realise that they are cared for and valued by all staff. Pupils understand that they are called to follow the example of Jesus. This manifests itself through their role in charitable works such as raising funds for Cafod and for HCPT The Pilgrimage Trust; the headteacher accompanies this pilgrimage each year and takes the pupils' intentions with her. In addition, pupils visit a local home for the elderly in order to engage with people living there. Pupils relate to each other with respect. Behaviour is good in most lessons and throughout the school. Some of the younger children can become boisterous in lessons at times, causing them to lose focus on their learning.

The school's mission statement, 'Learning for Life with Christ as our Light' is a clear expression of the mission of the Church and of the school's charism; it is known by most pupils and it is often referenced within collective worship. Staff show high levels of commitment to the implementation of the mission statement in lessons and throughout school life. St Mary's is a very strong, inclusive and welcoming Catholic community. During the inspection, for example, a significant number of parents attended an assembly led by Reception and Year 1 children, after which their views on it were sought. Staff provide very positive role models for pupils through their relationships with one another and through the care they show for them. Therefore, pastoral care is a strength of the school. Three staff members are trained to support pupils who have emotional and self-regulation problems; their work is regular and ongoing. The school environment is clearly Catholic and appropriate; liturgically correct displays are visible throughout the school. An appropriate range of opportunities to enhance the spiritual and

moral development of pupils is in place. The school's relationship with the parish is under-developed at present: the church shares the same site and there is clearly the potential in place to further enhance the Catholic life of the school by the parish priest and other parishioners becoming regularly involved, for example, in celebrations of the Mass and in other liturgical events. The school makes use of materials recommended by the Archdiocese for the provision of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE); it fully complies with expectations.

School leaders and governors show a high level of understanding and commitment in relation to their roles as guardians of the Catholic life and mission of the school. They are clearly able to articulate their plans for future development which includes the nurturing of the links between the school and the parish in order to further raise the quality of provision for the good of all pupils. Leaders are very committed to Catholic education. They engage parents effectively, seek their views on school life and communicate regularly in order to keep them well informed. The parental questionnaire completed as a part of the inspection process was generally very positive and parents appreciate the work of the headteacher and of the leadership team members. Leaders provide an impressive witness to the Gospel and to its values, showing an understanding of the need to support the most vulnerable educationally, spiritually and materially. The work of leaders takes the welfare of staff into account and those working in the school speak positively about improvements made in this area during the recent past. Governors are fully aware of their responsibility to monitor and to develop the Catholic life of the school and the show high levels of commitment to this work. They are aware of current priorities such as the need to foster stronger links with the parish. Self-evaluation work in this area is descriptive in nature but it makes reasonable points which include reference to the need to develop the school's work with the parish.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

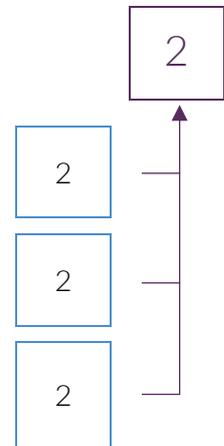
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Pupils generally make good progress as they move through the school. This includes disadvantaged learners and those with additional learning needs (ALN). Their religious literacy develops well, and they have an emerging understanding of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. This is reflected in the positive way that pupils interact with one another and with visitors. Pupils are able to speak with reasonable levels of confidence about their learning in religious education. This was evident, during the inspection, for example in discussions about the symbolism involved in Ash Wednesday liturgies. Learning is generally quite well presented in books and organised across the school and there is some evidence of excellence in this area. Most pupils concentrate well on their learning and they are appropriately engaged. However, some conduct in lessons involving a few of the younger pupils is boisterous and this makes a negative impact on their learning. Opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills and creativity within religious education are limited. Consequently, potentially high-attaining learners do not consistently achieve at or near to their potential. Pupils benefit from the work of teachers to extend their understanding by regularly and consistently prompting pupils to reflect on their learning. This is good practice. Standards in religious education are at least on a par with those in English, and it is clear that the subject is highly valued across the school.

Most teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and this is clearly reflected in their teaching. Pupils within Progression Steps 2 and 3 particularly benefit as a result. This is not the case in all areas and a minority do not display the same depth of knowledge. Most teachers are fully committed to the value of religious education and this is communicated effectively to their pupils. Overall, the quality of teaching is good but it is variable, ranging from adequate (with need for improvement) to very good, with some elements of excellence, which included a rapid

pace to the lesson, high expectations, high order questioning skills, the use of Welsh and purposeful and prayerful learning related to the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Planning is fully in place; however, insufficient opportunities are provided in lessons to develop learners' independence and to challenge all pupils. Marking is generally good and a consistent approach in relation to encouraging learners to respond to it is firmly in place. Teachers benefit from a good and appropriate range of resources and they use them effectively.

Leaders and governors are fully committed to their roles in aiming to ensure the best for the school's pupils. Governors are well informed about the school's work and they show passion for their work. The leadership team is relatively new and its members care deeply about their roles. They have the potential to make a significantly positive impact on the standards produced by pupils. They have a realistic understanding of the school's current position and they are aware of the priorities for development. Their skills complement one another very well. Leaders show a good understanding of the current challenges to be faced in relation, for example, to the professional development of staff and to ensuring that they make maximum use of support available from the archdiocese and from colleagues in other Catholic schools. The judgements made in the school's self-evaluation document are broadly accurate. It is a largely descriptive document, though, which lacks thorough analysis of the good range of data that is available. The work of leaders to monitor the curriculum is developing well and it yields a good deal of information. Leaders need to ensure that this good work has a more direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

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

2

Pupils' participation in and response to the school's provision of collective worship is good. Collective worship is central to the life of the school. Pupils respond well in a variety of ways including reciting traditional prayers, reflecting in silence, meditating and responding to scripture. Acts of collective worship are age appropriate and engage pupils' interest. They follow the cycle of the liturgical year. During the inspection, for example, the Mini Vinnies independently led a liturgy based on the Stations of the Cross, during which a prayerful atmosphere was created. The school makes reference to its Pupil Profile Virtues within collective worship; for example, inspectors observed a good headteacher-led assembly based on everyone being 'faith filled' and 'hopeful'. This created an opportunity for pupils to reflect on how they put these virtues into action in their lives. Older pupils confidently plan and lead collective worship in their classrooms and school hall. Christian Meditation forms a regular part of school life. Pupils respect this time and they are able to maintain a prayerful silence for extended periods.

The quality of collective worship provided by the school is good. Effective use is made in classrooms and communal areas both inside and outdoors to provide prayer areas. These areas are well cared for and conducive to prayer. The Mini Vinnies have ensured that each class has a good range of resources which the pupils use to plan their collective worship sessions. The school prayer book contains a range of formal and traditional prayers of the Church and the school. These are appropriate to the different year groups. Pupils recite these confidently. The prayer book is also used effectively as a means of supporting parents and carers to develop their children's prayer life. The school offers opportunities for parents and carers to attend collective worship in school. These events are well attended in person or via

live streaming and parents are encouraged to express their views. The school has positive intentions in relation to its work with the parish, but it is currently under-developed. Opportunities for sacramental preparation are provided by parish catechists. Classes take place after Sunday Mass allowing pupils to develop their sense of belonging to the wider parish family of St Mary's.

Leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for and outcomes of collective worship well. There is a clear policy for collective worship in place which has recently been reviewed and is followed by all staff. The headteacher, religious education and collective worship leads reflect on their practice and strive to develop pupils' experiences of high-quality worship. This team of leaders has great potential to make a very positive impact on the life of the school. Governors regularly attend assemblies and other liturgies. Leaders and governors show a very positive attitude towards the challenge of providing high quality and genuinely Catholic prayer and worship within the context of having just 32 per cent of pupils who are baptised Catholics. The chair of governors and the religious education link governor participate in formal monitoring activities such as learning walks and book scrutiny. They then feed back to the rest of the governing body so that all are well informed of the range and quality of the experience pupils receive. Some staff are skilled at teaching and model a range of techniques and strategies so that pupils can confidently plan and lead collective worship in school. Leaders have a thorough understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons and feasts and the necessary skills to develop meaningful themes for assemblies and other liturgies. Leaders provide appropriate on-going training and support for all staff in developing and delivering collective worship.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	401501
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	6793326
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bulwark Road, Chepstow, Monmouthshire, NP16 5JE
School phone number	01291623006
Headteacher	Rosaleen Cerqua
Chair of Governors	Francis Tindall
School Website	www.stmarysrc.monmouthshire.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	October 2013
Previous denominational inspection grade	Adequate

The inspection team

Lyndon Watkins
Karen Lewis

Lead
Team

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