



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 118782

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Most Rev. John Williams, Archbishop of Southwark

17–18 January 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

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

2

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship

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

2

The school fully complies with the curriculum requirements from 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

What the school does well

- School leadership and the subject leader for religious education lead by example, sharing a clear vision and are fully committed to moving the school forward.
- The recent review of the school's mission statement and development with the pupils of individual class mission statements has positively impacted behaviour and the pupils' understanding of the school's Catholic mission.
- Leaders and staff have created a caring, nurturing, and inclusive school in which pupils and the wider school community flourish and grow in their faith journey.
- Relationships in the school are strong, and staff feel well supported in what is a family-orientated community.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure the provision of religious education is consistent throughout the whole school and can be evidenced so all pupils benefit from good quality teaching and learning experiences.
- Secure greater opportunities for all pupils in all year groups to prepare and lead prayer and worship at an age-appropriate level.
- Governors to review their role to provide appropriate levels of strategic oversight and challenge that can be evidenced in governing body minutes.

Date Published: 7th February 2024

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

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

2

The school has a diverse community, which it serves well by living out its mission statement to 'Respect God, Respect Each Other, Take Pride in Our School and be Responsible'. This is known, understood, adopted and adapted by school community and at the classroom level in an age-appropriate way that has seen the development of class mission statements. The faith journey of individuals is recognised and supported, which instils in pupils respect and understanding of the beliefs and practices of other world faiths and cultures. Almost all pupils actively participate in shaping the Catholic life and mission of the school. There is an active School Learning Council and a Year 6 school Mini-Vinnies group, which have a well-developed social conscience, actively supporting the local community. Participation in this group could usefully be expanded to other year groups. Other pupil leadership roles, such as eco council, are at an early stage of development and would benefit from a more structured approach. The school's Liturgical Leaders lead pupils in class and school liturgies, and this is being developing further. The behaviour of almost all pupils is exemplary. Pupils are happy, actively engage in school life, and they feel safe. Pastoral care is a high priority, and the school is well attuned to the mental health and well-being of pupils, staff and community members. This is reflected in pastoral programmes, including relationships and sex education and personal, social, health and economic education, which are consistently well-planned and taught and celebrate Catholic teaching and principles utilising 'TenTen' resources and the 'Life to the Full' programmes.

All staff at St Mary's, Catholic and non-Catholic, support the faith that makes the school distinctive. There is a clear school vision moving the school forward within a framework of collegiality between all staff and governors supported by good working relationships that are evident. The pupils are respectful of all within the school, including visitors. The staff are committed and caring and work extremely hard so that all pupils feel safe and part of a Catholic

community. Vulnerable groups have access to an on-site counselling service, which has positively impacted those pupils, this is well-supported by parents. The school has been awarded a number of accreditations, including the Religious Education Silver Quality Mark, and is part of the Global Equality Collective. St Mary's is also working towards achieving the Oscar Romero Award.

The home-school-parish partnership is very strong. The parish priest and deacon are regular visitors to the school. School governance is developing well under the leadership of the Chair. There is growing clarity regarding their role in challenging the school in a supportive manner placing pupils at the centre of decision-making. The capacity to do this will be enhanced when current governing body vacancies are filled, and their strategic role is reviewed to provide appropriate levels of oversight and challenge that can be evidenced. Almost all parents/carers strongly agreed that they are well-informed and have many opportunities to engage with the school, saying that the school helps their children build positive relationships and provides clear moral teaching. One parent wrote, 'My children regularly come home and tell me about the RE they are learning in school. They have gained an understanding of what it means to be a good moral citizen and talk to me about what is right and what God would want. I am pleased with the knowledge and progress they are making. It encourages us as a family to focus more on our own spiritual lives'. A termly religious education newsletter is sent home to enable parents to understand what pupils are learning and this is valued by parents.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

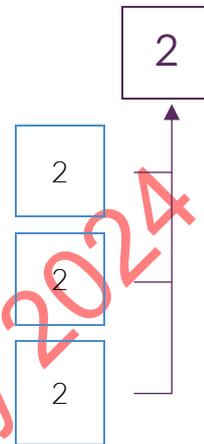
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Religious education outcomes are at least good, assessment data, pupils' books are at least in line with the other core subjects. It is recognised that work on further developing robust religious education assessment is ongoing. Pupils' books show work in various forms and great care is taken to present work. In some lessons, teachers visit previously learned knowledge. Embedding this more consistently will enable teachers and pupils to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Whilst there is a large emphasis on teacher talk, teachers are very affirming, and pupils remain well-behaved and engaged. However, passive learning needs to develop into active engagement consistently. In many lessons, discussions regarding new vocabulary extend pupils' religious literacy. Generally, questioning is effectively used for the retrieval of prior knowledge; the wider use of more probing questioning would give more pupils the opportunity to develop their ideas and deepen their understanding. Pupils in upper key stage 2 have these opportunities. Examples of this are frequent; on the topic of the new and old covenants, a pupil described the new covenant as being 'about relationships with people', and a CAFOD visitor to the school reflected on a statement made by a pupil who said, 'If you don't recognise the value of a person, it undervalues you'. Another explains that 'You may not want to do a thing, but because you have knowledge in your heart, you do it because it is right'. The engagement of pupils is excellent and would benefit from the consistent adoption of active listening and participation strategies.

Most teachers demonstrate confidence in their subject knowledge. Religious education lessons include some creative opportunities to impart knowledge to the pupils, including written work, artwork, video and question-and-answer sessions, and this could be implemented more widely. Teachers generally plan good lessons and manage time well to secure good learning in lessons across sequences of lessons which helps in meeting the needs of all pupils. They are taking more ownership of religious education curriculum planning, ensuring content is introduced in

an increasingly demanding way; however, at times, the tasks and activities dominate the lessons and are not always matched to pupils' current assessment. Where teaching is most effective, ongoing assessment is used to plan future learning. Marking and feedback enable pupils to recognise success and identify ways to improve their work, and progress is tracked throughout the year. Marking is not yet consistent across the school, and as a result, there are some fluctuations in attainment and progress. Teachers work well with support staff who are effectively deployed and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Religious education is well-resourced. Displays are of a high standard and reflect the cared-for school environment that provides a good learning environment.

Leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum for religious education is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Directory*. Professional development is a priority for leaders and opportunities support teachers to further develop their subject knowledge. The parish priest and deacon actively support religious education staff training. The subject leader has a clear vision and reports an increasingly consistent approach by staff across the school. This is prioritised at staff meetings, during which time all teaching staff explore best practices in religious education and how to achieve this. School self-evaluation recognises the strengths and more searching analysis and self-challenge would result in strategic actions to achieve consistently outstanding teaching and learning. Monitoring now needs to be further enhanced to ensure it identifies when pupils are not challenged. Religious education is maintained as a focus through the work of the religious education link governor.

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 respond well to the experiences of prayer and liturgy available to them. They talk very favourably about being able to lead prayer for their peers, readily volunteering to do this in other forms of worship, such as the weekly gospel assembly. In most classrooms, pupils are given the opportunity to lead prayer for their peers, skillfully supported by staff to do so. There is an opportunity to widen this participation in the role and provide pupils with opportunities to develop their involvement more independently. Pupils are respectful and engaged during times of prayer. This was particularly demonstrated through the pupil's prayers, which reflect a need to pray for broader world issues and other people they know. Consequently, they understand the varying forms of prayer. They are generally confident in delivering prayer and liturgy, although, at times, the impact can be diminished by pupils' lack of voice projection. Scripture, prayer, singing, reflection, and silence are generally well used. The liturgy leaders are rightly proud of their role in school and of being elected by their peers. For example, they ensure that everyone in their class signs the cross correctly at the beginning and end of a prayer. Pupils know well about structured and traditional Catholic prayer forms, but they also understand that prayer is personal and can be spontaneous. Pupils know it is important to have a varied approach to prayer, explaining that 'You can pray anytime, anywhere'. Whilst pupils can articulately discuss types of prayer and always engage reverently in it, they are less confident in speaking about how their prayers and reflections inspire them into action.

Prayer is central to everyday school life. Staff and pupils highly value the daily opportunities given to them. There is a balance of routine and spontaneous prayer across the school, reflected in pupils' understanding of various ways of speaking with God. Staff are excellent role models for this; they frequently pray with pupils, leading formally during prayer sessions and more spontaneously when appropriate. The Church's liturgical year is carefully reflected in the opportunities for prayer and the well-chosen scripture passages, hymns, and traditional prayers

used to mark seasons and feasts. Pupils reflect spiritually during prayer, leading them to know that 'Jesus was in our hearts' when they pray. Parents and families are also provided opportunities to join in with prayer and liturgy across the school. They appreciate the value and significance of doing so, regardless of their personal faith commitments, because staff greatly emphasise it. As a parent commented, 'I really appreciate how my child is being taught in school. I love the way they pray.' Good use is made of CAFOD resources with some cross-curricular links, particularly art and literacy. Teachers facilitate the prayer leader's involvement in leading liturgy, and this is an area for development to give all pupils leadership opportunities. The parish priest and deacon are actively involved in the well-planned liturgy experienced by the pupils, and the school greatly values their support and input. Good use is made of the school's prayer garden and reflective areas, which the school plans to develop further.

Leaders and governors identify prayer as a central priority, which is evident in the school's policy for religious education and how they construct the school calendar around prayer to include holy days of obligation and other important times within the Church year, such as Easter and Christmas. Governors, leaders, and pupils monitor prayer and liturgy, which leads to an analysis of the school's strengths but with less focus on the impact of actions undertaken to secure improvements, this is part of strategic oversight will further strengthen the provision offered.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	118782
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8873755
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Greenfield Road, Gillingham, ME7 1YH
School phone number	01634855783
Executive Headteacher / Interim Headteacher	Isabel Quinn / Joseph Pomeroy
Chair of Governors	John Mark Ndekwe
School Website	www.stmarysrcp.medway.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	16 th November 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Mr Stephen Beck

Lead

Mr Stephen Horsman

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