

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 139882

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Portsmouth

02–03 October 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 general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

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

Fully

2

Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant, following all general norms and expectations given by the Bishops' Conference.
- Currently there are no additional requirements.
- The school has responded fully in relation to the areas for improvement noted on their last inspection in 2018.

What the school does well

- Leaders have a strong shared vision for St Mary's, and have a clear understanding of how to lead on improvement in the school.
- Our Lady's service to God is embodied in the leadership of the school who are committed to the service of all members of the school community and demonstrate respect for the dignity of the person at all levels.
- Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge in religious education and have a good understanding of how pupils learn as a result of strong leadership support and coaching.
- Catholic social teaching is highly prioritised throughout school life, impacting on the pupils' understanding of how to put faith into action, referred often to as 'breaking open the scripture'.
- Pupils respond fully to the prayer and liturgy provided by the school, including being able to apply the messages conveyed to their own lives.

What the school needs to improve

- As a school dedicated to attaining exceptional practice, all stake-holders, including governors, need to take a more active role in using elements of the inspection framework as a tool for improvement.
- Pupils to work with others to prepare engaging, experiences of prayer and liturgy appropriate to their own age and understanding, as is currently modelled by older pupils within the school.
- Pupils need to develop a better understanding of how well they are achieving in religious education and what they need to do next to further improve their work.

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

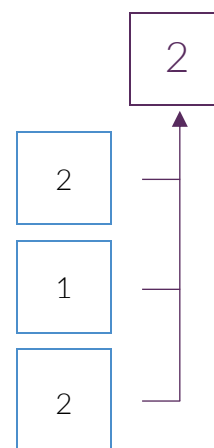
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



As a community, St Mary's embraces all that its mission of 'Learning and loving on our journey with Jesus' entails, with pupils actively participating in the Catholic life. Everyone is welcomed in this warm and inclusive school. Pupils feel valued and recognise that they all have the opportunity and responsibility to help others and be the best that they can be. One pupil explained, 'We remember that we need to be ready, respectful and safe, working as a team to encourage everyone.' Pupils have a clear understanding of the principles of Catholic social teaching, and are able to articulate how they apply them to everyday life. For example, the chicken monitor was very proud of the stewardship and care afforded to the school chickens, whilst a younger child said, 'Yesterday I saw a spider and I didn't stand on it. I let it crawl on my shoe', in response to the phrase 'All creation bears God's autograph.' At St Mary's, the pupils are very respectful, showing self-respect and respect of others. The pupils have a strong respect for those of other faiths. Pupils value the support and encouragement given by staff saying, 'They help people with additional needs which recognises human dignity.' To develop school chaplaincy further, planned opportunities for pupils to take leadership roles should be identified consistently throughout the whole school.

Staff highly value the mission of the school, with there being very strong witness throughout all aspects of school life. There is a great sense of community within the school and the sense of welcome is palpable. Staff shared, 'I've never felt such a belonging to a community' and 'there is a wider family feel here with warmth and a feeling of being safe'. The school is acutely aware of the individual needs of all pupils and seeks to meet them through a variety of pastoral measures. Much time and effort has gone into supporting all, including the most vulnerable. For example,

there is a lunchtime room that supports children with sensory challenges while children with medical conditions, and their families, are supported by kitchen and support staff in becoming independent in managing their needs. One parent shared, 'the inclusivity is outstanding. They've upped their game due to the headteacher.' A central strength of the school is how staff are very strong role models of respectful relationships and care in all their interactions. They are true witnesses to the faith and the dignity of the individual. The classrooms and shared areas reflect the school's distinct Catholic nature, and the school continually seeks improvement. For example, the recent addition of Catholic social teaching external displays, are an outward sign of its Catholic character.

There is a strong commitment from all leaders and governors to the school's Catholic life and mission. The senior leadership team, who are knowledgeable and skilled, drive the school's mission with clear vision and dedication. They serve the school with humility and walk alongside all members of the school community whilst leading. The pastoral support of staff is valued at the school. Staff shared, 'We're on this journey together, and the headteacher's door is always open - even if it is physically closed.' There is a deliberate and proactive approach to staff well-being which ensures security and success. The parish priest spoke warmly about the school's leadership and staff saying, 'There have been many improvements within the school and the school is extending their hand to those who are struggling.' He is welcomed as a regular visitor to the school, greeting families at the school gate in the morning as well as offering more formal visits to celebrate Mass or Reconciliation. The Friends of St Mary is a valued and active part of the school community. Leaders and governors hold Catholic social teaching at the centre of the decision-making and daily practice within the school. Whilst it is a school that knows itself and maintains high expectations, all leaders, including governors, need to engage more with an ongoing self-evaluation process so that improvement continues.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

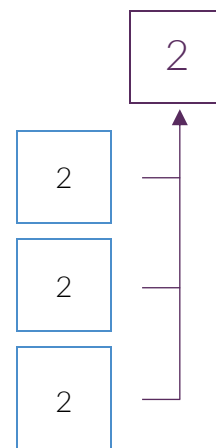
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



St Mary's provides high quality religious education with good progress being made throughout the school. Pupils display good learning behaviours, engaging well with their learning and participate with genuine interest. Pupils throughout the school enjoy their learning. Pupils' use of religious vocabulary and their ability to make connections with previous learning and scripture sources is notable. For example, in one lesson observed a child was able to speak confidently about the history of St Paul and how he has impacted on us as Christians today. Books are consistently well-presented and it is clear that pupils take great pride in their work. The school's improvement drive to ensure learning occurs through appropriate task design is evident. Tasks are open-ended enough to allow for individual creativity but scaffolded to support children to make links between their knowledge of scripture, Catholic social teaching and their own lives. One pupil said, 'RE is significant as we learn what Jesus has done for us and we try to follow in His footsteps, even today. He is THE role-model.' Pupils need to develop a better understanding of how well they are achieving and what they need to do next to further improve their work.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they understand how children learn. There is consistency of approach across the school which ensures religious vocabulary and key concepts are communicated clearly to all children. For example, teachers were observed using talk partners and modelling to deepen children's understanding. In one class, scaffolding effectively supported pupils to understand the message of the Beatitudes and their relevance for us today. Pupils were confident in applying them to life in school and at home, along with explaining which aspect of Catholic social teaching it may apply to. Teachers use questioning well. Teachers plan a variety of opportunities for children to present their learning creatively and with space for personal expression and individuality. For example, in one class children were creating leaflets to bring together their understanding of the creation accounts in Genesis, Catholic social

teaching and their personal responsibilities to care for creation. Following a feedback policy change, classes use greater depth questions, next steps questions and purple pens to various effect. For continued improvement this practice needs to be consistent throughout the school.

Leaders work tirelessly to ensure planning and resources for religious education are chosen carefully and reflect the demands of the curriculum. Religious education is valued as the core of the core subjects which is reflected in timetabling, professional development and resourcing. Leaders prioritise time for staff to attend diocesan training for teachers and leaders. Staff value the support and coaching provided by leaders which develops their understanding of theology and Church teaching. As a result, religious education is planned to meet the needs of most groups of pupils; however, pupils are not yet consistently provided with opportunities to fully extend their learning. Leaders have provided effective whole-school development of the understanding and implementation of teaching strategies, the impact of which was observed consistently across the school in the quality of questioning and high levels of pupil engagement. As a result, pupil outcomes are good. The subject leader for religious education is passionate and knowledgeable, providing effective coaching and support for all staff resulting in teaching which is consistently good. Leaders monitor religious education regularly and have a clear vision for its further development. Governors also need to monitor religious education, provide challenge and contribute to the self-evaluation process.

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 participate well in the experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school. They demonstrate reverence and respect and willingly participate in prayers, responses and song. In the strongest practice, pupils were able to silently reflect for personal prayer or to reflect on the scripture. The older pupils plan and lead prayer willingly and confidently. With the modelling and coaching of staff, pupils confidently plan and prepare Friday class prayers, choosing music, scripture and reflection. Pupils are able to reflect on the messages of the Word, 'breaking open the scripture' to discover the meaning for us today. Pupils can confidently articulate how their experiences of prayer and liturgy impact the choices they make each day and putting their faith into action. The pupils were keen to share their responsibility of stewardship following their worship, linked to creation in recent weeks. Through continuing strong leadership, the younger pupils now need to develop the skills and confidence to offer their own intentions and personal prayers within their class setting.

Pupils gather in prayer and liturgy daily and it is central to the rhythm of the school day. Prayer and liturgy reflect the shape of the Church's liturgical year, with feasts, saints and seasons celebrated and interpreted to help the pupils understand how the messages influence their daily lives. The pupils were keen to share how they pray. An example given was how pupils journey through the Stations of the Cross, linking this experience to charitable giving to Cafod. The children were invited to make a personal response to a station that spoke to their hearts. One child shared, 'The stations of the cross helped us to think about hard times and encouraged us to give our money to people who may be having those hard times now.' There is a range of prayer

opportunities linked to the liturgical calendar such as Harvest Mass, Easter Mass, Mass for the feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Sacrament of Reconciliation and a procession to honour Our Lady. Teachers' confidence and subject knowledge supports pupils to understand scripture and participate in prayer and liturgy experiences fully. Pupils develop their skills and confidence from the effective modelling provided by staff at all levels. Prayer spaces within the classrooms are prominent, well-cared for and valued. Prayer spaces can be seen in shared areas within the school which reflect the liturgical season and encourage reflection and participation. Leaders recognise that the next step is to further develop outdoor prayer spaces, including developing the use of the grotto and finding those opportunities for their beautiful grounds to inspire prayer. The school works well with the local parish and supports pupils to participate in the liturgy during Sunday Mass alongside their families and parishioners. Prayer bags are sent home every Advent and Lent, encouraging families to share prayers. These are valued by the children and parents who enjoy looking through them together.

Leaders ensure the school's policy for prayer and liturgy is reviewed and updated regularly to enable staff to deliver consistently good prayer and liturgy experiences. Leaders have developed a progression document for developing pupil participation and ministry which was evidenced by the confidence in the older pupils to talk about how they plan and lead prayer experiences. To further develop these skills, leaders now need to ensure all pupils move towards increasing independence when making choices when planning prayer. Leaders plan an annual calendar of events, dedicating time to celebrate feast days and days significant to the school's spiritual life, including opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Staff value the professional development opportunities provided by leaders for liturgical formation and so are confident in leading prayer experiences within their own classrooms. Staff feel supported by leaders at all levels, offering high quality opportunities for prayer. Leaders recognised that teachers new to the school need additional induction.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	139882
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8683334
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Cookham Road, Maidenhead, SL6 7EG
School phone number	001628622570
Headteacher	Rosemary Akehurst
Chair of governors	Sue Matthews
School Website	www.stmarys-maidenhead.org.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Mother Teresa Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	1 May 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Louise Buxton
Catherine Whatley

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