

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 142738

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Northampton

24–25 April 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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

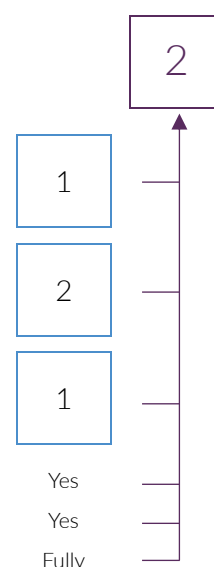
Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

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

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



What the school does well

- The headteacher's clear vision of the school's mission ensures that Catholic life is central to everything the school does.
- RE is given at least parity with other core subjects which ensures the pupils make good progress and that they can talk about their prior learning confidently.
- Pupils are rightly very proud of their school and enjoy a real sense of belonging.
- Catholic social teaching is at the core of the headteacher's vision, whilst being taught and truly lived out by the staff.
- The school is welcoming and inclusive and works hard to ensure the needs of the individual are met.

What the school needs to improve

- Involve children from more year groups in the leadership of Catholic life through the Mission Team.
- Promote higher order thinking by encouraging the children to ask more questions.
- Develop a more strategic approach to identifying areas of development in religious education which can be worked on by the whole staff.

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

1

Provision

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

1

Leadership

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

1

1

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School, the Catholic life and mission is at the centre of everything. Since the last inspection, the school has embraced a new mission statement, 'With Christ as our guide, we let our light shine' which was consulted on and approved by the whole school community. As one member of staff said, 'It is at the forefront of everything we do.' Pupils know and live out the school's mission. They are rightly proud of their school and are particularly proud of its Catholic nature. Pupils value the work of the new school chaplain and participate in the many opportunities that she provides. A core group of pupils have been commissioned by the bishop to be part of the Mission Team and there are faith ambassadors in each class. The school chaplain understands the need to involve more pupils from different year groups in the leadership of Catholic life through the Mission Team. The school issues a weekly newsletter to promote the work of the school, and especially the Catholic life of the school. Pupils are engaged in Catholic social teaching in the curriculum and they respond to those demands in everyday life. This is well demonstrated by the number of pupils keen to join the 'Peacemakers' group and the fact that they were presented with the Cafod LiveSimply award this year.

St Mary's lives out the mission of the Church in many ways but, in particular, by ensuring that the most vulnerable pupils are included and at the forefront of all their work. Staff at all levels know families well and they show a real commitment to their pastoral care. The school's exceptional provision is particularly evident in the work of the family-support worker. The pupils at St Mary's know that they are loved and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. The school uses a carefully planned virtues programme which supports the pupils' excellent relationships. One parent wrote, 'Everyone works together to be the face of Christ in this lovely nurturing school.' Chaplaincy work is led by a new chaplain with strong support from the

leadership team. This has a strong influence on the Catholic nature of the school which is evident in the enthusiasm the children show for the many opportunities for spiritual and moral development.

The school's Catholic identity is pivotal to leaders' work. The head teacher has a clear vision for the mission of this school. She has brought staff along with her and prioritised developing leadership. One member of staff wrote, 'We are encouraged to have a go at everything ourselves, but we know that if we are unsure of anything, someone is there to offer help and support.' The school environment is a real celebration of this Catholic identity and, creatively, they have recently added the Marian room as a prayer space. St Mary's is a highly inclusive community, welcoming pupils from a range of faiths and Christian denominations. The school also ensures that everything is done to enable pupils with considerable special needs are included in all areas of Catholic life. Governors regularly visit the school. Visits are incisive and have a clear focus ensuring that Catholic life permeates everything the school does. They have a clear understanding of the importance of Catholic life for the pupils in their care. The relationships, sex, and health education curriculum meets both statutory and diocesan requirements. The school has adopted the Ten:Ten scheme this year, which has been well received by teachers, pupils and parents.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

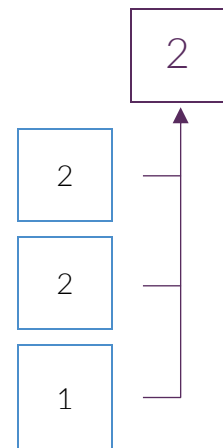
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



As a result of consistently good teaching the pupils at St Mary's make good progress in religious education. Many pupils come into the school with very little or no knowledge of religion. They make a good start in the Early Years and as a result have a good understanding of Jesus and many Bible stories as they move to Key Stage 1. Pupils are confident talking about their prior learning and show that they are developing secure knowledge. In lessons, the majority of pupils concentrate and behave well. Pupils work independently and collaboratively but would benefit from taking more initiative in their learning. Encouraging pupils to ask more questions would support this and would then enable more able pupils to make even better progress. Pupils' work is of a consistently high standard. All the pupils who were spoken to by the inspectors said they enjoyed religious education. There is a positive learning environment which results in very good behaviour. The support given to children with special educational needs is a strength of the school. They are supported well through adaptations and adult support which ensures they achieve well.

The majority of year groups follow *Come and See*, the scheme of work recommended by the diocese. This is appropriately sequenced to support learning and ensures that pupils are taught the knowledge, understanding and skills required by the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Planning for the Reception class has led to the adoption of new resources that link to new *Religious Education Directory*. Teachers' subject knowledge enables them probe pupils' understanding. This results in effective dialogue between teachers and pupils. The next steps would be to support the pupils to initiate some of these dialogues through their own questions which in turn would promote more higher order thinking. Teachers have high expectations around behaviour and how hard pupils' work. Pupils are clearly motivated. The standard of presentation in religious education books is consistently high. Pupils' respond to feedback in line

with the school policy, particularly where it identifies what they need to do to make progress. There were examples of a variety of activities, including extended writing, in lessons observed as well as in books. This has helped to create a real enthusiasm for religious education in school with many children identifying it as their favourite subject.

Leaders at St Mary's ensure that religious education is given core parity with other subjects. There is thorough monitoring of religious education, including tracking of standards each half term. They have introduced a bespoke assessment system, which gives examples of what an expected or greater depth outcome would look like at each focus in *Come and See*. Pupil progress is tracked to identify pupils who need additional support. The monitoring results in individual actions which are then followed up later in the monitoring cycle. Standards in religious education would be further improved by developing a strategic approach to identifying whole school areas for development and sharing good practice. *Come and See* is used effectively to ensure that pupils progress sequentially through subject knowledge. This scheme has been adapted to include knowledge organisers and bespoke assessment grids. The subject leader has secured improvements by ensuring regular professional development through termly meetings which have resulted in consistently good teaching. The development of subject leadership of religious education is a priority and the school has supported religious education subject leaders across the trust and diocese. Self-evaluation is thorough and the outcome are shared and challenged by governors.

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

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1

1

The pupils at St Mary's are fully engaged with the prayer experiences provided for them. These include Mass and liturgies on holy days of obligation and other significant days. Pupils have a clear understanding of the seasons of the liturgical year. There is a real variety in the range of collective worship which is led by a variety of people. Inspectors observed collective worship led by the mission team, by the headteacher, by a local vicar and a more intimate class collective worship led by the chaplain. Pupils understand the importance of prayer. In one virtues-themed assembly, a pupil who was asked 'how we can support others' replied that we can 'guide them and pray for them'. There is a clear understanding of the power of prayer. In discussions with pupils, it was clear that they enjoy prayer and they know the parts of the liturgical year. Pupils work well with others preparing liturgy. They are supported in leading a variety of experiences of prayer with guidance and support to ensure quality is high. Pupils' experience of prayer and liturgy would be further enhanced by the provision of additional opportunities to contribute to planning.

At St Mary's, prayer is also central to school life. Prayer and liturgy have been carefully planned to include Gospel, Catholic social teaching and Virtues, as well as a celebration assembly. The school has recognised that they have a large number of Christian pupils from other denominations and work closely with a local vicar to help promote families' prayer life beyond school. The school has been creative in its use of space and has recently created a new space: the Marian room. Prayer stations are a further feature of the school's provision and are enjoyed by pupils, who feel more relaxed in participating and contributing to discussion in this way. Staff really value a weekly prayer group led by the chaplain. They also appreciate the opportunity to participate and feel it helps them to develop themselves spiritually. Collective worship designed to enhance the school mission and the children are reminded to let their lights shine as they

process from their classrooms with a lantern. A small minority of parents expressed a desire to be invited more into the prayer life of the school. However, inspectors found opportunities for parents to be involved, including a weekly coffee morning and prayer with the chaplain.

Prayer is a central part of life at St Mary's school. The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is clear, relevant, confidently used and supports staff with less experience. Leaders and governors have prioritised prayer and liturgy, as evidenced by the introduction of a lay chaplain, which is a considerable investment. Senior staff and the chaplain support staff to plan effective liturgy. Mass is celebrated regularly in school and local clergy were very complimentary of the pupils' participation. There are plans to re-introduce more intimate class Masses which were stopped during the pandemic. The provision for prayer and liturgy is evaluated regularly and as part of this process, pupils' views are gathered. This helps to engage the pupils and to ensure that future experiences of prayer are relevant. Governors have a clear understanding of collective worship in the school. They know the strengths but are keen to support the school as it develops prayer and liturgy further.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	142738
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9413350
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Woodside Way, Kings Heath, Northampton, NN5 7HX
School phone number	01604581011
Headteacher	Kirstie Yuen
Chair of Governors/Trustees	Nicola O'Neil
School Website	www.stmaryscatholicprimary.northants.sch.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Academies Trust Ltd
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non selective
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	March 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Mark Holdsworth
Ann Maloney

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