



DIOCESE OF SHREWSBURY

DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT:

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

School: Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School
Address: Belgrave Avenue
Congleton
Cheshire
CW12 1HT

Tel No: 01260 274690

URN: 111335

Headteacher: Mr S Blain

Chair of Governors: Mrs C Ingram

Date of Inspection: 16 January 2020

Inspectors: Mrs J Johnson
Mr K Toms

Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School

“Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School is a **Christ-centred** learning community, where all are **safe, valued and loved.**”



SCHOOL: Saint Mary's, Congleton

DATE OF LAST INSPECTION: November 2014

JUDGEMENT FROM PREVIOUS INSPECTION: Good

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT FROM PREVIOUS INSPECTION

Continue to develop and refine assessment, monitoring and moderation throughout the school.

Further develop links with nearby Catholic primary schools in the area of assessment and moderation.

Develop further the questioning skills of teachers and support staff, in order to enable higher order thinking skills to be developed by all children.

PROGRESS MADE WITH AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT FROM THE PREVIOUS INSPECTION

The school has followed all Diocesan guidelines in relation to assessment since the previous Inspection and is well placed to embrace the new national procedures which will be introduced in the Diocese in due course.

It now has a detailed Action Plan which includes monitoring of all aspects of RE and the Catholic Life of the school.

The school has developed links for moderation with the Catholic schools in the Holy Family of Nazareth MAT, as well as with the Catholic schools in the locality.

In the lessons observed during the Inspection, it was evident that open questioning was being used successfully to enable the development of higher order thinking skills.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS: how effective is the school in providing Catholic Education.

1

This is an outstanding Catholic school

The above judgement on overall effectiveness is based on all the available evidence following the evaluation of:

CATHOLIC LIFE

1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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- Saint Mary's is an outstanding Catholic school, where all are safe, valued and loved.
- During a period of significant change, the Governing Body has ensured that the school's Catholic Mission and ethos have been at the forefront of all their decision-making. This is recognised and has been much appreciated by the staff.
- All staff share the Governors' full commitment to the school's Catholic Mission and ethos. These are fully embedded in all aspects of the school's life and work.
- The Headteacher, together with the Religious Education Coordinator, provide outstanding and inspirational leadership. Along with the Chair of Governors, they are passionate about the school's mission as a Catholic school.
- High expectations and aspirations are clearly evident in this school. Leaders, including Governors, are ambitious for the school.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, and recognise that the school's Catholic ethos permeates every aspect of school life. As one parent put it, 'The school clearly demonstrates the core Catholic values throughout all aspects of the school life and has a significant impact on their daily life, in and outside school. This is shown towards each other and from staff. An environment where love, care, and forgiveness is at the centre.'
- Staff morale is high, and there is a great sense of teamwork in the school. Staff are particularly grateful to the Governing Body for their support in the recent period of change. Staff provide exemplary role models for the pupils.
- Pupils are a joy to be with. They show great respect for staff and for each other. They have high levels of religious literacy and are developing a rich religious vocabulary. They are able to reflect on and clearly articulate their thoughts and answers to deep questions. They know a wide range of traditional Catholic prayers. They are reverent whilst at prayer. Their behaviour is exemplary.
- The school's website clearly celebrates the school's Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- There are strong links between the school, parish and home.

Summary of key findings:

What the school needs to do to improve further

Seek more opportunities to:

- Share the outstanding practice in Religious Education and the Catholic Life of the school, both within the school and beyond, and celebrate it with the wider community.
- Enhance the spiritual development of staff and pupils through appropriate Continuing Professional Development.

Information about the Inspection

The Inspection of Saint Mary's Catholic Academy Primary School was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Shrewsbury Diocesan Framework and Schedule for Denominational Inspections approved by the Bishop of Shrewsbury. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule follows the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA 2017).

The inspector reviewed in detail the following aspects:

- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school
- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education
- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship
- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education, Collective Worship and the Catholic Life of the school

The Inspection was carried out by two Inspectors over one day:

- The Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 7 classes.
- Whole School Collective Worship led by the Headteacher was observed, as well as Pupil Led Collective Worship in Y3, and Class Collective Worship in Y2.
- Discussions were held with the Headteacher, the Religious Education Coordinator, two Governors (including the Chair of Governors), pupils, and five members of staff.

- A sample of pupils' Religious Education books was scrutinised from every class, along with the Religious Education Coordinator's file and files for Catholic Life of the School, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- A range of documents was made available and scrutinised including the Diocesan Self Evaluation Form (DSEF), the School Development Plan and the Religious Education Action Plan, attainment and progress data, school policies, class timetables, newsletters, minutes of governing body meetings, and the Headteacher's Report to Governors.
- Displays around the school and in classrooms were also noted.

Information about this school

- Saint Mary's is a one form entry Voluntary Academy Catholic primary, catering for 2-11 year olds. The school has an annual admission number of 30, and there are currently 213 pupils on roll (plus 24 in the Nursery), 53% of whom are baptised Catholics. The majority of pupils are of White British Heritage.
- The school serves the parish of Saint Mary's Catholic Chapel, Congleton.
- Since the substantive Headteacher left the school at the end of the school year 2017-18, there has been a period of significant change in leadership, with the new substantive Headteacher being appointed as from the end of November 2019
- The Religious Education Coordinator, who was teaching in the school at the time of the last Inspection, has taken on this role since the last Inspection
- Staffing includes a full time equivalent of 9.6 teachers and 11 teaching support staff. More than half the teachers are Catholic. Three teachers hold the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies (CCRS) and one is gaining the Certificate currently
- The school is organised into eight single-age classes, including the Nursery

Full report – inspection judgments

CATHOLIC LIFE

The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

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| The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school | 1 |
| The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school | 1 |
| How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school | 1 |

- Saint Mary’s school believes that the Catholic life of the school is ‘vibrant, joyful and palpable’, and this was the experience of the Inspection Team during the Inspection.
- All pupils spoken to during the Inspection appreciate and participate fully in the Catholic Life of the school. They understand and can clearly articulate that the school is a ‘Christ-centred learning community, where all are safe, valued and loved’.
- They are rightly very proud of their school and display a strong sense of community.
- Pupils value the school’s Catholic ethos deeply and can describe ways in which the school’s Mission is lived out in their daily lives. They can give examples of how their Catholic faith shapes the way that they live and influences the values that they hold
- There are many opportunities for pupils to participate in activities which promote the school’s Catholic ethos within the school and in the wider community, such as the GIFT (Growing in Faith Together) Team, the Mini Vinnies Group and the Eco Council.
- Within school, pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, particularly when they are supporting pupils younger than themselves, for example when the GIFT Team read Bible stories to those who put themselves forward from the Reception class.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how Catholic schools are different from other schools, and as one pupil put it, ‘We put Christ at the heart’.
- Pupils are open to the needs of others, and their work for a range of charities is impressive. The Mini Vinnies Group makes a significant contribution to the school’s work in this area.
- The behaviour of pupils is exemplary, and pupils are keen to celebrate the achievements of others. They value and understand the reward system that is currently in place. Pupil Voice is a strength of the school, and pupils know that they will be listened to.
- Pupils have a deep devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, and know a great deal about her life. They know that she is the patron of the school, and that she was, as one pupil put it, ‘a sweet and kind soul’.
- Relationships at all levels are a real strength of the school, and there is a very calm atmosphere in the school at all times. Pastoral care is outstanding, and as a result, pupils truly do feel ‘safe, valued and loved’.
- Displays around the school and in classrooms are clear evidence of the high priority the school places on the learning environment in a Catholic school.

- Governors have been unwavering in their quest to appoint the right person to the role of Headteacher, and their support for the school during the period of uncertainty is to be commended.
- Leaders and Governors are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education and are passionate about ensuring the school is the best it can be. They are fully aware that the development of the Catholic Life of the school is one of their core responsibilities.
- The 'Faith and Gospel Values' Working Party (Governors and Staff) has been instrumental in promoting and enhancing the Catholic Life of the school since the last Inspection.
- Self-evaluation of the Catholic Life of the school is accurate and is effective in identifying strengths and areas for development.
- Governors know Saint Mary's extremely well and are frequent visitors to the school. They are kept well informed by the new Headteacher and the Religious Education Coordinator, who is also a member of the 'Faith and Gospel Values' Working Party. Governors have a monitoring plan in place, and take part in the full range of activities, including Learning Walks, book scrutinies, data analysis and discussions with pupils.
- The Parish Priest is also a frequent visitor to the school, and his contribution to the development of the Catholic Life of the school is much appreciated by all stakeholders.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and are quick to recognise the positive impact of the new Headteacher.
- There has been a good level of Continuing Professional Development offered to staff, since the time of the last Inspection, provided through outside providers, in-house sessions, and training opportunities offered by the Diocese.
- Staff have also taken part in leadership opportunities beyond the Diocese in order to enhance the Catholic Life of the school.
- The school engages particularly well with the Diocese and follows all Diocesan guidelines and initiatives fully. The Chair of Governors is the Governor Representative on the Diocese's Primary Relationships and Sex Education Working Party.
- All stakeholders recognise the partnership between home, school and parish as being particularly strong, and this is appreciated by all.
- The school has implemented the scheme 'Journey in Love' for its Relationships and Sex Education Programme, as well as the 'Jigsaw' Programme for PSHE, but will soon be reviewing its provision in due course, taking into account the statutory national requirements for Relationships and Sex Education, as from September 2020.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious Education is outstanding.

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| How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education | 1 |
| The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education | 1 |
| How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education | 1 |

- When pupils were asked, they told Inspectors that they love Religious Education lessons, and this is also evidenced by the online pupil questionnaires completed by Y2 and Y6 pupils.
- Pupils make very good progress from their different starting points and outcomes at the end of both KS1 and KS2 are very high, and have remained high during the recent period of change.
- All pupils were fully engaged in the 7 lessons observed during the Inspection, and their enthusiasm for, and interest in, Religious Education were plain to see.
- Behaviour for learning is outstanding, and as a result, all lessons moved at a quick pace, with learning opportunities being maximised.
- The school's 'Next Steps' marking policy is very well implemented by staff and fully understood by pupils. Pupils know when they have done well in Religious Education and are regularly challenged to think more deeply. As a result of this, feedback to pupils is a strength of the school.
- Religious Education is given full parity with the other core subjects of English and Mathematics. The Religious Education Coordinator is very skilled, and she supports new staff very well. Assessment procedures are well established, and consistent throughout the school. Her passion for Religious Education has meant that it has remained the highest of priorities during the recent period of change. The Religious Education Coordinator engenders respect from all members of the school community.
- Pupils have a rich religious vocabulary, and understand appropriate terminology used in our Catholic faith.
- The Religious Education pupil books are beautifully presented, and handwriting across the school is a strength.
- Assessment and moderation meetings take place regularly throughout the year, both in school and through the Holy Family of Nazareth MAT. Staff would welcome more opportunities to share good practice in small groups across the MAT in order to learn from other schools, for example, in Year Group groups. Having said that, the school is in a good position to share its own best practice across the school, as well as support other schools within the MAT and beyond.
- Leaders and Governors ensure that the Religious Education curriculum fully meets the Bishops' Conference requirements, and that at least 10% of teaching time is given to Religious Education in all three Key Stages.
- Teachers plan and deliver highly effective and often very creative lessons, and all lessons observed during the Inspection were at least good, with the majority being outstanding. Teaching Assistants provide very good support in lessons, and it is

evident that teachers value the support that they give. There is a culture of high expectations and high aspirations in the school.

- Most teachers are very confident in their subject knowledge and have a genuine passion for teaching Religious Education. This means that lessons are very well structured and build on previous learning, which results in pupils being highly engaged in their learning.
- In all lessons observed, talking partners were used very effectively, and at all times, pupils responded immediately to the signal from the teacher.
- Displays in all classrooms promote and celebrate learning in Religious Education, and all classrooms are tidy and well organised. This adds to the calm atmosphere in the school.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Collective Worship is outstanding

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| How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship | 1 |
| The quality of provision for Collective Worship | 1 |
| How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship | 1 |

- Pupils told Inspectors that they love Collective Worship at Saint Mary's, especially since the new Headteacher has come to the school. He provides a model of exemplary practice for staff and pupils.
- There is a real enthusiasm for Collective Worship in the school, which is reflected in the joyful quality of the communal singing, and the thoughtful response and reverence shown by pupils. It is clear that Collective Worship is firmly placed at the centre of the school's Catholic life.
- In Whole School Collective Worship, pupils show great respect for staff and for each other and are keen and enthusiastic participants. Again, as in Religious Education lessons, Talking Partners are used very successfully to discuss important aspects of the theme.
- All staff present in Whole School Collective Worship were very good role models for the pupils, and the celebration observed during the Inspection was enhanced by one of the pupils playing the piano as pupils left the hall.
- Parents are appreciative of the opportunities to be involved in the prayer life of the school, but some parents would welcome more opportunities to be invited into the school to share in Collective Worship and other aspects of the Catholic Life of the school.
- Pupils, at an age appropriate level, contribute very well to the planning of class Collective Worship, and by Year Three, are able to make appropriate evaluations of Collective Worship. By the time pupils are in Year Six, pupils are able to plan and deliver high quality Collective Worship independently.
- Pupils across Key Stage Two can describe and give examples of the main elements of Collective Worship and are able to link these to each other. They can also describe ways to enhance Collective Worship by creating an atmosphere, for instance through the use of music or lighting. Their understanding of the Church's liturgical year and its corresponding colours is outstanding.
- The GIFT Team and the Year 6 Buddies play an important role in enhancing the prayer life of the school, and it is commendable that these pupils take part in these activities voluntarily.
- The Class Collective Worship books are a beautiful celebration of the range of written responses and active participation made by the pupils. These books mirror the high standards set in the Religious Education books, and are a further example of the status given to Collective Worship by school staff.
- Pupils have a deep respect for those of other faiths and none. They are clear that their school is an inclusive community where all are welcomed, regardless of their faith.
- Staff have benefitted from a range of Continuous Professional Development opportunities in order to enhance their own spiritual life, as well as that of the pupils, but would welcome more opportunities for this as they do not yet feel very confident in leading prayer with their peers.