



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for
St Mary’s Catholic Primary School, Knaresborough

URN: 142176

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Marcus Stock, Bishop of Leeds on:

Date: 9 & 10 November 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	2
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Collective worship (p.5) 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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well:

- Pupils are happy, well-behaved, confident, and secure, both as individuals, and within class groups, collaborating with each other readily and demonstrating good relationships with their teachers.
- Staff, led by the excellent example of the head teacher, are strongly committed to the Catholic ethos and character of the school, ensuring that, as one parent put it, ‘all decisions are made in the light of God’s love’.
- The outcomes achieved by pupils in their religious education lessons, especially in terms of the knowledge they can demonstrate, and the presentation and content of their books, is excellent, due to consistently effective, interesting, and creative teaching, that is never less than good.

This Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection was carried out under canons 804 & 806 of the code of canon law. For maintained schools and academies in England it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.48 of the Education Act 2005. For maintained schools and academies in Wales it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.50 of the Education Act 2005.

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- The charitable activities organised by the school throughout the year are greatly valued by the pupils, parents, and staff, demonstrating their understanding of God's command that we are called to serve those less fortunate than ourselves.
 - Pupils, appropriate to their age, are skilled at planning, leading and evaluating class worship.

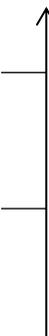
What the school needs to improve:

- Review the Mission Statement of the school, so that it reflects the needs of the current school community.
- Review current practice in the provision of child-led prayer and worship, creating a progression document which supports teachers in knowing what skills pupils should develop at each stage in their movement through the school, and focusing on enhancing their spiritual and reflective experience.
- Enable pupils to confidently articulate and understand why and how Catholic social teaching influences the actions they can take in their daily lives, enabling them to have a positive and proactive impact on their world, our common home.

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:.....	2
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



St Mary's is a happy, calm, caring, and welcoming learning community that embraces its Catholic identity. Stakeholders are proud of their school's Catholic mission. Pupils are respectful of people who are different to them, including those from different faiths, and minority communities. Pupils support a wide variety of vulnerable groups and charities, including Help for Heroes, MacMillan Cancer, Catholic Care, MND, a local food bank, the British Legion, Harrogate Homeless Appeal, and much more. The mini-vinnies take Christmas cards to the residents of the local care home and together with other pupils, they sing carols while they are there. However, pupils do not readily articulate these activities in terms of Catholic social teaching, or the common good, have not yet benefited from developing this specific understanding. The worship leaders enjoy providing support to the head teacher in Monday worship assemblies. The school's website, social media, and newsletters reflect its Catholicity. Parents are supportive of the school and speak highly of the staff. One parent told inspectors that the school is a place where 'They get all the important things right'. Another reported that the school had 'transformed the lives' of her children.

The school works actively with other Catholic schools and takes full advantage of opportunities for professional development provided by the diocese and the Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust. The school community tries hard to develop links with the parish, wherever possible. Pupils experience Mass in school and at the nearby church. Relationships among parents, pupils, and staff are very good. A particular strength is the support given to families from the traveller community, which enables them to fully participate in the life of the school. Pastoral care for more vulnerable pupils, and families whose home circumstances are challenging, is good. Staff members are positive role models and greatly respected by parents. There is a well-planned calendar of opportunities to

enhance the spiritual and moral development of pupils, staff and parents. The mission statement of the school, 'With Christ at the centre, we show unity, respect, joy, love, and courage', provides inspiration to all stakeholders. However, this mission statement was last reviewed several years ago and has not been revisited recently to ensure its relevance to the community as it is today and to clarify the difference between the 'values' and 'virtues' used throughout school.

Leaders have strong systems for supporting the Church's mission in education. They clearly articulate their duty to make this their prime responsibility, and respond readily to diocesan initiatives. They do their best to support the local parish community and the parish priest. Engagement with parents is supportive and effective. The school is sensitive to the needs of families who are not Catholics. In recent years some pupils and a member of staff have expressed interest in becoming Catholics. Several parents, new to the school, told inspectors their children had settled quickly and that they felt welcomed immediately. The well-being of staff is a high priority, with access being provided to good quality support both from colleagues and the trust. The head teacher and other senior leaders give their time and energy generously, especially to new staff members. The curriculum experience for pupils supports a Catholic understanding of the world and links are made to subjects other than religious education where they arise. Leaders self-evaluation is accurate, due to effective monitoring and self-challenge. Leaders promote the application of Catholic social teaching principles, so that resources are used effectively to support those in greatest need. This commitment is expressed by pupils as well, though not in terms of Catholic social teaching or the common good specifically.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....	1	
Pupil outcomes How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....	1	
Provision The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....	1	
Leadership How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....	1	

Pupils consistently demonstrate excellent knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education lessons, appropriate to their age. Behaviour is always good. Almost all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well, relative to their age and starting points. Without exception, inspectors found high levels of religious literacy and high standards of presentation and knowledge in books. Throughout the school pupils are comfortable recalling previous learning and referring to this in lessons. They enjoy their lessons greatly, due to the creative, varied and interesting activities teachers plan for them. One younger pupil, whilst learning about the Holy Trinity, recalled that Abraham was promised descendants ‘more numerous than the stars’. In older classes pupils demonstrated a knowledge of the story of Jonah, and discussed the ten commandments whilst deciding what the world would be like without rules. Others identified numerous forms of injustice and explored links to the parable of the mustard seed, deciding that small actions can have a big positive impact. As they move through the school pupils show increasing abilities to collaborate, debate, discuss, and question. They understand and benefit from the feedback and marking strategies used by teachers, enabling them to understand how well they are doing and what they can do to improve.

Almost all teachers, have high levels of confidence and demonstrate impressive subject knowledge. They use questions skilfully, making sure all pupils are given the opportunity to explore sometimes quite difficult subjects such as injustice, rule breaking, God’s will, trust, hope and faith. Pupils’ efforts are recognised and celebrated, both spontaneously and within a whole school reward system. Pupils are encouraged to show behaviours that fit with the school’s values and Christian virtues. Feedback and marking is extremely consistent across the school. Pupils are able to explain the policy accurately and they know how well they are doing and how to improve. Support staff across

the school are highly skilled and dedicated. Staff know that religious education supports the moral and spiritual growth of pupils and helps them understand how to see the world. They make learning interesting and fun with a wide variety of strategies including silent debates, diamond nine prioritising grids, on-the-spot marking, thought clouds, talk partners, role play, lollipop questioning, whole class whispered answers, discussions and hot seating. One teacher sent cards to the same person, but addressed them to him as an uncle, footballer, and son, to illustrate the way the Holy Trinity can be understood as three persons in one.

Leaders ensure religious education has a central role in the life of the school. The subject leader is highly effective. She is greatly valued by the other staff members and engages fully with colleagues across the diocese and trust. All leaders, in addition to the head teacher, are committed to the provision of high quality professional development for staff and the impact of this is obvious in all lessons, where teachers have excellent and confident subject knowledge and make lessons interesting, focused, well-paced, varied and imaginative. Resources for religious education have been provided at least at the same level as other core subjects, with a large proportion going into training for staff, and the impact of this is very obvious. Teaching is never less than good and is sometimes outstanding. Monitoring, by leaders, governors and trust officers is well-planned and supports improvements effectively. They know their school's strengths and areas that need to improve. The school follows a diocesan approved religious education scheme to ensure progression and continuity, but teachers use other sources and tools to make their lessons more effective.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....	2
 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

Pupils respond well to the experiences of prayer and liturgy. They listen and engage fully, taking on leadership roles with enthusiasm and confidence. They use the prayer spaces around school, both inside and outside, and particularly enjoy using the outdoor Mary Garden and woodland area for prayer liturgies such as the Stations of the Cross during Lent. Whilst pupils are planning, leading and evaluating class worship regularly, doing this in a well-structured manner, they do not allow enough time and opportunity for reflective and spiritual experiences to be fully appreciated. Pupils enjoy the new meditation sessions they have on a Friday, which do provide a very special opportunity for them to reflect and explore their relationship with God. The mini-vinnies, made up of older pupils, are currently supporting the creation of a Remembrance space just inside the entrance to the school. Along with the worship group, they recently did a pilgrimage walk to a local shrine dedicated to Our Lady and have helped to serve refreshments after Mass at the parish church. The worship group are involved in preparing and supporting the head teacher in whole-school worship.

A daily pattern of prayer is engrained in the life of the school. Pupils have opportunities to write their own prayers. Pupils know traditional prayers and experience a variety of liturgy forms including Mass. Parents told inspectors they would like to see greater efforts to make the Mass more engaging for their children. Older pupils participate in devotions and liturgies, such as walking the Stations of the Cross in the woodland area and going to Mass on Ash Wednesday. They use the mini-vinnies prayer box to ask for prayers from the school community. They like creating class Jesse Trees, and Advent wreaths. Staff are skilled in supporting pupils to lead their own worship, but ensuring deeper spiritual experience has yet to be developed. Pupils know traditional responses, joyfully singing 'Alleluia' to greet the Gospel. Inspectors loved hearing the youngest pupils singing

'My Lighthouse' with gusto during their worship. Pupils say the Rosary regularly during May and October and set aside specific times to celebrate feasts in honour of Our Lady. Staff pray together in meetings, strengthening their personal faith experience. The school makes good use of its internal and external spaces, giving pupils and staff several prayer spaces which can facilitate prayer. Pupils like these, and told inspectors they would welcome opportunities to use some of them more spontaneously, for private prayer.

Leaders have a planned strategy for the delivery of worship and for ensuring that by the time pupils reach older classes they can prepare, lead and evaluate their worship. Leaders have a planned calendar of worship liturgies, for key moments in the Church's year, including holy days and the feasts of Our Lady. Professional development for staff is provided by the school, diocese, and trust, and is valued greatly by them. Leaders are models of good practice. As a result, all staff understand the importance of prayer and liturgy in the life of the school. Teachers ensure that class worship consistently follows an established four-part structure. However, the encouragement in pupils of an understanding of the presence of God, in the moment, by providing longer periods of silent reflection, is not fully developed. The voice of pupils is systematically sought, however the impact of their opinions and ideas on improving worship experiences is limited. Leaders provide good resources for worship, including appropriate Bibles, drapes, candles, statues and crosses. Good use is made of technology such as tablets, and software on interactive white boards to enhance worship. Leaders monitor worship carefully, identifying where improvements can be made.

Information about the school

Full name of school	ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
School unique reference number (URN)	142176
Full postal address of the school	Tentergate Road, Knaresborough. HG5 9BG
School phone number	01423 864631
Name of head teacher or principal	Helen Tomlinson
Chair of governing board	Monica Uden
School Website	https://www.stmaryscps.org
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	BISHOP WHEELER CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Trustees	DIOCESE OF LEEDS
Gender of pupils	MIXED
Date of last denominational inspection	8th & 9th March 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Mark Brennan	Lead inspector
Angela Phillips	Team inspector

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