



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 149316

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham on:

Date: 2-3 November 2022

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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	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- St Mary's plays a vital role within the local community. Parents are steadfast in supporting the school's work, not only in the classrooms but also in how the school engages pupils with social issues in Studley and beyond.
- Leaders are strong, authentic disciples of Jesus Christ. They inspire staff and pupils in their witness to the school's mission and values.
- All pupils enjoy religious education because of the variety of learning tasks teachers provide them.
- Pupils embrace the central role prayer plays at St Mary's because of the importance staff place on it and the care with which it is prepared.

- Governors prioritise Catholic life, religious education, and collective worship in their allocation of resources, meaning all three key areas are always well-supported in their continuing development.

What the school needs to improve:

- Provide more opportunities for greater depth questioning and activities which challenge pupils' hearts and minds in religious education.
- Review the policy on prayer and liturgy to empower pupils to undertake age-appropriate leadership roles at all ages and so that it is more useful to staff.
- Link leaders' analysis of monitoring activities to strategic school improvement plans explicitly and directly.

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:.....

1

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

Pupils know this is a Catholic school because the mission statement is reinforced to them from all angles. This means they can articulate the importance of loving each other and learning how to do this. Pupils know they are cared for and loved by God; consequently, pupils clearly express the importance of treating each other with deep respect. Because of the example set by staff, and the priority leaders place on Catholic Social Teaching, pupils are empowered to take a leading role in actively seeking opportunities to live out the Catholic faith in a meaningful way that impacts others; for example, food bank collections and harvest donations to benefit those who are homeless in the local area. Pupils know everyone is unique because God created them, even though some struggle to articulate their understanding. However, much progress has been made since the last diocesan monitoring visit because of a strategic focus on improving religious literacy.

The mission is a clear and inspiring expression: a call to unite and support one another in discerning their vocations – something older pupils are more confident in speaking about. The school's focus on developing pupils' God-given talents is evident in the way staff seek to incorporate creative elements into prayer: a beautiful and compelling example of this was seen by inspectors in Year 6. Staff are enthusiastic witnesses to the mission in their classroom-based work and in how they model Christ-like behaviours. Christ is unashamedly at the heart of St Mary's; he is the catalyst for all activities, and the community is proud of this. The school is an exceptionally joyful place, embracing in its welcome and celebrating a generous spirit of hospitality and care. Because leaders go the extra mile to welcome community members with different faith and tradition backgrounds, parents and pupils are made to feel a core part of

the community from the moment they join. The recently appointed pastoral support worker is highly driven and effective in her work with pupils and parents to promote their well-being in school. The physical environment promotes the school's Catholic identity through high-quality displays and photographs; they stimulate a love of God, one another, and learning. A dynamic range of chaplaincy activities, including retreats to Alton Castle, Harvington Hall, Oscott, and St Chad's, effectively contribute to pupils' formation. A staff retreat to Douai Abbey provided a high-quality opportunity for the spiritual development of staff.

St Mary's is deeply rooted in the community; there are numerous links with parents, the parish, and the local area, and staff work hard to support one another in bearing witness to the Catholic faith. The school serves the parish well, which helps the school in its provision of community events, such as the Christmas fayre. Parental backing is exceptionally supportive and strong; they appreciate the efforts leaders and staff go to in listening to and responding to their views. Senior leaders are inspirational witnesses to the Gospel and the Church's values, leading to staff holding them in high regard as outstanding models of Catholic leadership. Leaders provide high levels of pastoral care to staff, which is reinforced by further confidential provision facilitated by the multi-academy company (MAC) that the school has recently joined. A Catholic curriculum is offered here; themes are discussed in staff meetings and followed up by individual teachers. Subject leaders do not yet collaborate or formally map out where curriculum areas can be delivered through a Catholic lens, an area with which the MAC can assist leaders.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement
grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

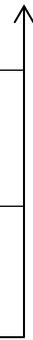
The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for
religious education.....

2



Pupils talk about their prior learning in religious education and connect this with what they are currently learning. Through their contributions to discussions, and in some instances through teachers' questioning, they can extend their learning; consequently, pupils make good progress against the curriculum. Pupils continue to become increasingly religiously literate; they use specialist vocabulary accurately and confidently in many cases. Leaders plan to continue their work in this area. Pupils are very aware of the demands of religion on their lives. Because of the school's outstanding provision of Catholic life and mission, this is a concept that pupils are frequently exposed to and something they can do independently. Most pupils can work independently when asked to; however, teachers' overreliance on worksheets inhibits pupils' capacity for creative flair and thinking. Most pupils concentrate well and want to achieve the goals teachers set; they respond well because they unanimously enjoy the subject. This is because of the variety of learning styles teachers use and because pupils regard religious education as distinguished from their other subjects; as one pupil told inspectors, 'It is peaceful and different'. Pupils enjoy thinking about the topics and stories relating to Jesus' teachings and can apply these to their daily lives. Most know how well they're doing and have a general idea of how to improve their work; however, some struggle to explain how to make further progress because the feedback they receive does not always make this explicit. Pupils' religious education attainment is comparable to their attainment in other core subjects.

Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. They can impart it clearly, ensuring pupils learn in each lesson. However, teachers' planning does not give sufficient regard to pupils' current assessment; consequently, some pupils do not make enough progress in lessons because work is pitched too low or because teachers do not ensure they are learning quickly enough.

A good range of teaching activities is used, particularly those which use different artworks that successfully stimulate discussion and some higher-level thought. Teachers ask questions which help them to determine where pupils are in their learning journey, though they don't always ask questions that require responses at a greater level of depth; some teaching assistants ask well-targeted and precise questions which help consolidate and extend learning, particularly with the youngest children. Teachers celebrate pupils' achievements in religious education routinely and spontaneously, which, in most cases, motivates pupils and adds to their enjoyment of the lesson. Occasionally, the activities offered to pupils do not match the intended learning outcome; when this happens, pupils make less progress and struggle to achieve the demands of the curriculum.

Governors ensure that religious education has full parity with other core subjects. Frequent training is offered to staff, and much information from the archdiocese is shared with them, ensuring St Mary's follows all expectations and practices. Teachers appreciate the opportunities to share new initiatives and discuss ideas with each other to improve teaching. The subject leadership team members collate their expertise to ensure pupils learn about the faith well. Evaluative monitoring takes place, focusing on the impact of the school's actions. Successes and areas for development are identified and shared with staff; however, because much of this is done informally, the link between the findings from monitoring and strategic school improvement plans is not always immediately apparent. Monitoring takes place primarily through observations of learning and work scrutiny, though the subject leadership team must optimise its use of time to make this work more efficient and strategic.

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

1

Leadership

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

2



Pupils respond well to prayer and very well to the liturgy provided by the school in partnership with the parish priest. Pupils sing well, even when spontaneous and unprepared. Pupils understand that there are various ways of praying, though they are most confident using the 'gather, listen, respond, go forth' structure. Music is used particularly effectively. Pupils are familiar with the Church's liturgical year, and whilst older pupils can talk about the impact certain seasons have on the prayers they offer, younger pupils often struggle to speak beyond liturgical colours. A fantastic interactive liturgical year wheel display in the hall keeps the Church's seasons and feasts at the forefront of pupils' minds. Pupils work well with each other to prepare prayer and liturgy, particularly in Key Stage 2. When pupils are leading prayer they have prepared themselves, staff do not always give pupils the space to be genuinely independent and often interject prayer with questions to assess understanding; this must be avoided to enable prayer to be a genuine spiritual moment of encounter with God.

Prayer is fundamentally central to the daily routines at St Mary's; because of its prominence and the care and attention with which it is prepared, pupils experience a naturally embedded rhythm of prayer, which celebrates significant moments in the school's life and the liturgical calendar of the Church. Pupils are familiar with many ways of praying, including thanksgiving, intercessions, and petitions, and they are comfortable and confident when reflecting silently for extended periods. Whilst pupils' knowledge of the traditional prayers of the Church is good, they are yet to know the entire repertoire of prayers issued by the archdiocese. The use of Scripture is a particular strength of the school: passages used in worship are always well-selected and seasonally relevant, which helps pupils to engage fully. Staff are good role models; they consistently and accurately model the correct gestures and participate well.

Teachers help pupils to construct prayer using the practices of the Catholic Church, resulting in high-quality experiences. Space is used well to enhance the spirituality of extended prayer sessions, which often feature highly creative and interactive visual aids that significantly enrich pupils' prayer experience.

Leaders ensure that the celebration of the Eucharist is the source and summit of the school's faith life, which the parish priest described as 'joyful'. Leaders have a secure understanding of the different ways of praying, which is relevant to the community's needs, and reflected in their meticulous planning of worship, consequently demonstrating high standards to other staff. Policy on prayer and liturgy is regularly reviewed, most recently two terms ago; however, it does not clearly identify the school's expectations concerning prayer or a clear strategy for building up pupils' skills in preparing and participating in prayer throughout their time at St Mary's. This is another area where the MAC is already preparing support for leaders and governors. Self-evaluation has historically included pupils' views, though it has been a while since these were included when planning school improvement in this area. Furthermore, whilst there are good opportunities for staff's spiritual formation, formal training explicitly focused on prayer occurs infrequently, resulting in some variation in standards across classrooms.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	149316
Full postal address of the school	Pool Road, Studley, Warwickshire, B80 7QU
School phone number	01527 852 140
Name of head teacher or principal	Owen Finnegan
Chair of governing board	Yvonne Brennan
School Website	https://www.stmarysrcstudley.co.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Our Lady of the Magnificat Catholic MAC
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	April 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Ben McArdle	Lead inspector
Robert Duigan	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