



DIOCESE OF Arundel and Brighton

DENOMINATIONAL (S48) INSPECTION REPORT

St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School

Address: Hastings Road, Bexhill-On-Sea, East Sussex, TN40 2ND

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School Unique Reference Number: 114565

Headteacher: Miss V. Vanderschelden

Chair of Governors: Miss S. Cousins

Lead Inspector: Mrs A. Oddy

Associate Inspector: Mrs G. Askham

Inspection date: 8th March 2016

Overall Effectiveness

Previous Inspection: 1

This inspection: 1

Catholic Life: 1

Collective Worship: 1

Religious Education: 1

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School is an outstanding Catholic school because:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ St Mary Magdalene’s is a welcoming and inclusive school offering pupils a rich and vibrant educational experience firmly rooted in its Catholic ethos. ▪ The school community embraces and nurtures all within it. Excellent relationships between staff, parents and pupils are a feature of the school. ▪ An attractive, well kept learning environment proclaims the school’s Catholic identity and enhances the curriculum. ▪ Pupils are polite and courteous. Their behaviour is exemplary. They are proud of their school and enjoy being part of their school community. ▪ Leaders and managers show commitment and dedication and are inspirational role models. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High quality collective worship nurtures pupils’ spiritual growth and their knowledge of the celebrations and traditions of the Church. ▪ Pupils are encouraged to plan and lead prayer and worship and do so with confidence. Pupils act with reverence and respect, knowing that these are special times and form part of their relationship with God.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The mission statement is at the heart of the school’s Catholic life. Governors, school leaders and staff are committed to ensuring the well being and personal development of each pupil. Pastoral care is excellent. ▪ Pupils are encouraged to consider the needs of others, in their school community and beyond. They are active in fund raising for those in need and in participating in events in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standards in religious education are high. All groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well. Pupils’ work is beautifully presented, indicating pupils’ pride in their work. ▪ Pupils enjoy religious education and appreciate its importance to their own lives.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School is situated in the St Leonard's Deanery of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. The school is maintained by East Sussex local authority. It serves the parish of St Mary Magdalene in Bexhill-on-Sea.

The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 82.8%.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years old.

The number of pupils currently on roll is 251.

The percentage of pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium funding is 12% and is below the national average.

1.5% of pupils have a statement of special educational need or an EHC plan.

7.5% of pupils have special educational needs.

The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, but the school has an increasing number of pupils from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is above average at 28%.

The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10% in all key stages.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Increase the percentage of outstanding lessons in religious education by ensuring a close focus on the lesson objective and providing greater challenge, particularly for more able pupils.
- Continue to develop and embed current good practice in marking and feedback to pupils, ensuring consistency throughout the school.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

- Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to the school community and appreciate their commitment to the Catholic life of the school. They are proud to belong to St Mary Magdalene school and know they have responsibilities to the school, to each other and the wider community.
- Pupils are offered many opportunities to take roles of responsibility and respond to these very positively. These roles include Liturgy Reps, Playground Angels, and Sports Crew. They help and care for each other willingly and enjoy contributing to making their school a happy and harmonious place to be.
- Pupils are very involved in the school's spiritual life, including preparing class liturgies and participating in the school's prayer life.
- They appreciate the importance of considering the needs of others. They are active in fund raising for those in need and in being part of their local community outside the school. This year every class has adopted one of the Corporal Works of Mercy and is active in putting this into practice.
- Pupil behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are polite and courteous to adults and to each other. They appreciate the need to listen to the views of others and the importance of forgiveness.
- Pupils appreciate the many opportunities the school offers and are happy to play their part.
- They recognise and value the school's Catholic tradition and identity. The school has strong links with the parish. Pupils also participate in diocesan events, enjoying being part of the wider family of Catholic schools.
- Pupils of other faiths feel welcomed and included, saying how much they feel part of the school.

- Pupils consider their school to be a special place and a nurturing environment. One said, 'Our attitudes are good. We try our best and behave well. The school is calm and we have a good mind set towards learning.'
- Pupils describe their fellow pupils as always friendly and willing to help each other. They know that adults are there to help them if they have any worries.

The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school.

- The school's mission statement is central to the life of the school, informing its policies and practice. It is clearly displayed in the school and is reviewed and discussed on a regular basis.
- Staff are committed to the mission of the school. School retreat days offer an opportunity for staff to reflect on their own spirituality and sense of vocation. A member of staff described the retreat day as 'a great opportunity to reflect on our faith and our mission in school'.
- The school community embraces and supports all within it. Strong pastoral care systems ensure that parents, pupils and staff are supported. A nurture room, a counsellor, individual needs assistants and work with outside agencies ensure support as appropriate.
- The school is an inclusive community in which all pupils are enabled to flourish and achieve. Pupils with special needs are sensitively supported and encouraged. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress and achieve well. A pupil said, 'Everyone is different and everyone is welcomed.'
- The school's Catholic life is reflected in the attractive and well kept learning environment. High quality displays and artefacts celebrate the school's Catholicity.
- The school's behaviour policy reflects the mission statement and incorporates the principles of personal responsibility, fairness and reconciliation. These principles are reinforced in religious education lessons and assemblies as part of the school's ethos.
- Staff are very much included in the Catholic life of the school. Staff questionnaires are part of school self evaluation. Staff are very positive regarding being part of this happy school. Comments include 'I have never known such a joyful and connected community as the one we have helped to develop here at St Mary Magdalene. I truly feel part of something special' and 'We are very much a team. Everyone is supportive, there is great morale and our school is a happy place to work.'

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school.

- School leaders are committed to the Catholic life of the school. Senior leaders promote the Catholic identity of the school at all times. This is evident in collective worship, excellent relationships between all members of the school community and the comprehensive programme of events in the school's Catholic life. School leaders and governors also provide a link with the parish, which they serve in a variety of ways including as Readers and Eucharistic ministers.
- Governors are fully involved in the Catholic life of the school. They attend school celebrations and events and are active in evaluating the school's Catholic life and identifying possible improvements.
- The parish priest strengthens the parish / school links by frequent visits to the school. As well as celebrating Mass in school, he provides valuable support by visiting classes and attending staff meetings to support the school's religious education programme. He also takes part in the induction programme for new staff, particularly those new to Catholic schools.
- The school has a strong culture of partnership with parents. Parents' views are listened to and form part of school self evaluation and development planning. A large number of parental questionnaires were returned; all were very positive in their view of the school. One commented, 'At St Mary Magdalene's there is a fantastic relationship between staff and parents' and another, 'St Mary Magdalene school is working every step of the way alongside us to help us raise our children . . . we are very grateful and extremely proud of our school and all the staff that make this primary school so wonderful.'
On arrival every morning parents and pupils are greeted at the gate by senior staff, providing a warm welcome and a calm start to the day.
- The governing body is outstanding in its commitment to the school and its drive towards ever increasing school improvement. Governors are conscientious in their monitoring and evaluation of the school's Catholic life and are focused on celebrating strengths and identifying areas for development. Working with school leaders, this leads to honest and accurate school self evaluation and well targeted planned improvements.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AND PRAYER LIFE

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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

- Pupils understand the importance of collective worship as part of the school's Catholic life and an expression of their own faith. They enjoy taking part and welcome the opportunity to be part of a worshipping community.
- The act of collective worship observed was of an extremely high standard. There was a calm, reflective atmosphere throughout. A beautiful Lenten display provided a focus for prayer. Carefully chosen music and resources enhanced the theme. Exceptionally harmonious singing was a notable feature of this act of worship and is a real strength of the school. Many pupils commented on how much they enjoyed hymn practice.
- Pupils are involved in the planning and preparation of liturgies and in leading prayer. They are skilled in using resources to enhance prayer and worship opportunities.
- Pupils are familiar with the traditional prayers of the Church. They are also confident in creating and contributing their own prayers. They are able to use periods of silence and reflection for personal prayer.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its feasts and seasons.
- Those of other faiths are welcomed as part of the school community. Pupils know that the beliefs and practices of others should be respected.
- High quality prayer focal areas are a part of every classroom. Pupils take responsibility for maintaining these, often bringing in religious artefacts or resources from home to enhance the display and aid prayer. Many focal areas offered interactive prayer opportunities organised by the pupils themselves.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

- Worship and prayer are at the heart of the school and central to school life. Pupils and staff value their prayer opportunities. Pupils are confident in speaking of 'talking to God and listening to him' and welcome periods of silence or quiet reflection as times when they can do this. One said, 'I can feel God around me.'
- Staff meetings and Inset days always include prayer, with all staff members offered opportunities to lead readings and prayers.
- Collective worship is carefully planned to offer a wide range of liturgical celebrations with links to the liturgical year. Themes chosen for worship allow all pupils to take part and encourage personal reflection on their spiritual journey.
- Families are invited and welcomed to the school's many celebrations. They appreciate the opportunity to join the school in prayer and worship. A parent commented, 'The school offers such a caring, nurturing and spiritual environment.' Another wrote, 'The children benefit hugely in their spiritual well being.'
- Class liturgies and celebrations are recorded in class journals, which celebrate the spiritual journey of each class.
- Exceptional support provided by senior leaders ensures that all staff are encouraged and enabled to develop their skills in providing high quality collective worship opportunities to the pupils.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

- Senior leaders are skilled at planning and delivering high quality collective worship and share these skills with the staff. They are excellent role models, demonstrating dedication and commitment to nurturing the spiritual development of the school community.
- The religious education leader has considerable knowledge and experience, particularly regarding her work as a lay chaplain.
- Governors support the school by participating in the many events of its Catholic life and ensure this is part of their monitoring role. Discussion and evaluation are a regular feature of governing body meetings.
- Collective worship is part of a planned programme which is monitored by the religious education leader. This forms part of school self evaluation and development planning.
- Pupils are also involved in the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship. They are encouraged to consider how they would like to develop and enhance the liturgical life of the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

- Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons and appreciate the importance of religious education to their lives. They take pride in their work and are interested and attentive in lessons.
- Behaviour for learning is excellent. A Year 1 pupil wrote, 'I love religious education' and this was borne out by many others across the year groups.
- Pupils' work shows very high standards of presentation. The development of religious literacy is evident and shows progress across the year groups.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well. All groups of pupils are enabled to make good progress, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Attainment in religious education is generally in line with other core subjects, although attainment at the higher levels is less than in the core subjects. Providing more challenge for higher attainers should now be a focus for school development.
- Pupils show good knowledge and understanding and are able to apply a wide range of skills to their learning. They are able to reflect on their learning and apply it to their everyday lives. They appreciate the importance of religious education and the teachings of Jesus in influencing their behaviour and their care of others.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

- Standards in teaching and learning are good. Teaching observed as part of this inspection was securely good, with some lessons demonstrating outstanding features. Teachers showed good subject knowledge and built on previous learning. Lesson objectives were clear and pupils made good progress within the lesson. In some lessons a sharper focus on the lesson objective would have improved pace and clarity.
- Resources were used effectively to enhance lessons. A wide range of teaching strategies engaged and interested pupils. Pupils with special needs were included and sensitively supported.
- Where best practice was observed, a sharp focus on the learning objective maximised learning and achievement of the success criteria. This good practice should be shared in order to increase the percentage of outstanding teaching.
- Differentiation was evident in all lessons observed and is an established part of lesson planning. The school should now consider increased levels of challenge, particularly for more able pupils, to deepen understanding and raise attainment.
- Marking is regular and developmental and shows a dialogue between teacher and pupil. There is evidence that pupils are given time to respond to teachers' comments and pupils recognise that this helps them to improve their work. School leaders appreciate that this now needs to become embedded and consistently applied throughout the school.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

- Provision for religious education meets diocesan requirements and the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. The school follows the 'Come and See' programme of religious education.
- School leaders and managers have a comprehensive monitoring schedule for religious education. This includes learning walks, book scrutiny, lesson observations and planning scrutiny. The results of these are discussed and evaluated and inform school development planning.
- The religious education subject leader shows commitment and dedication to her role and to continual school improvement in religious education. Support for staff includes modelling lessons, staff meeting discussions and INSET training. The parish priest also plays a valuable part in supporting staff and a monitoring role as part of the governing body.
- School self evaluation results in well targeted planning and strategic action. As a result, pupil outcomes are high.
- Religious education has a high profile in the life of the school and has a profound impact on the moral and spiritual development of pupils. A parent wrote, 'I cannot praise the school highly enough for its commitment to the Catholic faith and teaching'.
- The school has many links with other agencies and the wider community. School and parish links are actively fostered and enrich pupils' learning and engagement in religious education. Parish links enhance the religious education curriculum, providing first hand quality experiences of the liturgical life of the Catholic Church.
- The religious education curriculum is well resourced, with high quality resources evident in the school.

Summary of Inspection Judgements

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

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Catholic Life

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

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The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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Collective Worship and Prayer Life

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

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The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

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How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

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Religious Education

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

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The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

2

How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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