

Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Report on the inspection of denominational education under  
Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School  
Magdalen Road  
St Leonard's on Sea  
East Sussex  
TN37 6EU

Chair of Governors:	Mr C Rowe
Headteacher:	Mrs J Smith
Inspectors:	Mrs A Ireland Mrs M Hughes
Inspection date:	27 <sup>th</sup> February 2007

# Introduction

## Description of the school

The school is voluntary aided. It is situated in the St Leonard's Deanery of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. It is maintained by East Sussex Local Authority. The principal parishes which the school serves are St Thomas of Canterbury, St Leonard's and Holy Redeemer, Hollington. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 83%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10+% in Key Stage and 10+% in Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 225. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals is average. Around 17% of the pupils receive extra support in class. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds although there are a growing number of pupils from several ethnic minority groups. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is around average and increasing.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

St Mary Star of the Sea is a good school with many outstanding features, such as the quality of its Catholic life and the provision for prayer and worship. Under the guidance of the headteacher, staff work as a team to provide, as stated in the mission statement, 'an atmosphere of loving concern in which the truths of Christianity can be experienced'. All issues raised in the last inspection report have been successfully addressed. Through rigorous self assessment the headteacher, senior management team and governors have clearly identified areas for development. The school is therefore well placed to improve further.

### Grade 2

#### What steps need to be taken to improve further?

- Devise an action plan to raise attainment in religious education and incorporate this into the school improvement plan.
- Increase the number of activities which challenge more able pupils, in order to further raise attainment.
- Continue to develop assessment by tracking pupil progress to identify those in need of support and challenge.

# The Catholic life of the school

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher gives very good leadership. She has a clear vision of Catholic education and is focussed on continuing school improvement. She has established a strong and cohesive team in response to recent staff changes. Members of the team work closely together to create a learning environment which encourages pupils to give of their best. Governors give good support to the school and exercise their responsibilities effectively. They have a sound knowledge of policy and practice which is achieved through consistent monitoring, as evidenced by the recent review of religious education. Their commitment to the Catholic identity of the school is demonstrated by the decision to offer a senior post for religious education and through the appointment of a teaching assistant with responsibility for liturgy. The work undertaken by the school when reviewing the mission statement was excellent. Parents and pupils were involved and consulted, thus ensuring that all members of the school community are fully aware of its importance in driving the work of the school. Time was given for each class to study the mission statement and pupils were encouraged to write their own versions. As a result, child friendly versions are much in evidence round the school.

## **Grade 2**

### **Quality of Catholic life of the school**

The school's distinctively Catholic ethos is strongly evident in the many good quality artefacts and beautiful displays throughout the school, such as the statue of St Mary Star of the Sea in the entrance and the class displays on 'Memories'. This is an inclusive community, where staff and pupils respect diversity. This is demonstrated in the displays such as the ones on 'One World Week' and Diwali and the reverence given to faith articles, including those associated with Islam. Very good support is given to all pupils including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, through initiatives such as the appointment of an EAL assistant, 'Bubble Time' and the work of the Emotional Literacy Group. The school displays a strong commitment to social inclusion, evident in the links with the local Special School, the welcome given to students from the Pestalozzi village and the support given to the local hospice. Relationships between all members of the school community are excellent. Adults provide very good role models for pupils. This, together with the calm working environment, the strong ethos of care and support based on Gospel values, and a behaviour policy based on affirmation and high expectation, results in excellent pupil behaviour. Very good opportunities are given to pupils to exercise responsibility in a variety of ways, such as the Buddy Scheme, the school council and the Peer Mediation Group. Generally, parents have very positive attitudes towards the school. One parent wrote 'I am proud that my child attends this school'. Parents appreciate the care and support given to their children. They are kept well informed about the life and work of the school including religious education

and their views are sought through surveys. Of particular note, is the quality of the annual pupil report which details progress in religious education and includes a contribution from the pupil. The partnership with the parishes the school serves is excellent. This is in part due to the strong involvement of staff in all aspects of parish life, including children's liturgy and Eucharistic Ministry. Parish events are advertised in the weekly newsletter and are well supported by staff, parents and pupils. The school has developed good links with the local St Vincent de Paul society. Pupils regularly join with the parish for Mass and parishioners are invited to the annual May Procession. The parish priest plays a full and active part in the life of the school. In addition to celebrating class Mass, he regularly visits classes and works with pupils. For example, he recently conducted a press conference for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6, which enabled them to gain insight into his work and vocation. Preparation for the sacraments is parish based and well supported by the school. For example, a teacher is a parish catechist and staff attend the Communion celebrations.

## **Grade 1**

### **Quality of provision for personal and collective worship**

The provision for worship is outstanding. A very full programme of school and parish Masses, liturgies and assemblies ensures that the school more than fulfils its statutory obligations. Very good opportunities are given to pupils to participate in acts of worship. This was demonstrated during a Year 6 assembly on the theme of Lent. Excellent use was made of drama, part speaking, unaccompanied singing, liturgical dance and prayer, to create a thoughtful assembly. It effectively reflected the season of Lent and provided a prayer opportunity for the staff, parents and pupils who attended. Prayer is central to the life of the school and takes place throughout the day. Teachers often help to create an atmosphere conducive to prayer through the use of candles, incense and suitable music. As a result, pupils pray easily and engage in a variety of prayer forms with confidence. Each class has a focus for prayer. The quality of these is outstanding. They are bright, interactive, reflect the liturgical year or current topic and are well used. For example, pupils in a Key Stage 2 class placed a knotted piece of wool in a basket to remind themselves of their Lenten promises. This was then placed on the prayer table to be used at various times during Lent. Very good opportunities for spiritual development are evident in the many displays throughout the school and the development of Our Lady's Garden in the school grounds. Each class is given an opportunity to visit the garden which has now become integral to the prayer life of the school. Liturgical dance is a strength of the school. Opportunities are given to staff to pray together before regular meetings and a staff retreat has been planned at Worth Abbey later in the term.

## **Grade 1**

# Religious education

## **Achievement and standards**

Attainment on entry to school is generally below average, particularly with regard to communication skills. As they move up through the school, pupils make steady progress. They are able to relate what they have learnt to their own lives and experiences. For example, one pupil in Key Stage 2 said 'Now I know I need to be kinder and to be more like Jesus'. Another said 'Doing work about being a parent of a baby has helped me to understand more about God'. Pupils make good progress in the development of oral skills and religious vocabulary. Most pupils have well developed empathetic skills which are used effectively to deepen their understanding of scripture. This was demonstrated in a Key Stage 2 class, where pupils were asked to imagine their thoughts and feelings, had they been apostles present at the Last Supper. Pupils make very good use of skills gained in other curriculum areas in order to progress. For example, pupils in the Foundation Year were engaged in role play and in a Key Stage 2 class, a group of pupils were using their computer skills as part of an activity on memories. Pupils enjoy their lessons. They co-operate well with each other. They listen attentively and are eager to answer and share their ideas. When given a task they are able to organise themselves and settle quickly. Pupils are able to record their work in a variety of ways, including reports and storyboards. There is less evidence in books, of the more able pupils engaging in challenging activities which would secure their higher attainment.

## **Grade 2**

### **Quality of provision for religious education**

Teaching is good and often very good. Learning objectives are clearly articulated to pupils. Lessons are well planned with a range of interesting activities, such as 'hot seating', discussion work and liturgical dance. Very good use is made of the interactive whiteboard and ICT to enhance lessons. Teachers have very good classroom management skills and as a result pupils' behaviour is excellent. Good questioning skills are employed to encourage higher level thinking and in some classes questions are identified in planning. This is good practice. The process of assessment has been established and is working well. It is beginning to inform planning. A good start has been made on tracking pupil progress, which will in time have a positive impact on attainment. Some good examples pupil self assessment were evident. Moderation of pupils' work is undertaken by teachers in order to secure consistency of judgement. This is collected in a school portfolio. This work should now be matched to the new attainment targets, in order to clarify expectation and assist new members of staff. All teachers mark positively. In some classes interactive marking is used to effectively challenge pupils. This good practice should be shared.

## **Grade 2**

### **The religious education curriculum**

The school gives more than sufficient time to the teaching of religious education, which results in a rich and vibrant curriculum. For example, in a Key Stage 2 class, pupils were given time to write, plan and execute animated films on the Nativity story and as a result, produced some excellent work. Meticulous planning ensures that all areas of the curriculum are effectively covered with appropriate emphasis placed on the Relate part of the 'Here I Am' programme. Excellent provision is made for the teaching of other faiths and consideration is given to reflecting the culture of the local community. The curriculum is supported by events such as 'One World Week', where parents are invited to share their experiences and contribute items for display. The local parish church is well used to support various topics, such as Baptism. The 'Here I Am' focus group which consists of those gifted and talented pupils who are showing particular ability in religious education, discuss and plan challenging activities. These are then incorporated into the programme of work. This is good practice. Excellent support is given to pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. This is achieved through sensitive adult intervention and appropriate activities. As a result these pupils have full access to the curriculum. Good policy statements are in place for religious education and worship. The sex education and education for personal relationships programmes are well linked to 'Here I Am' and are firmly rooted in Catholic tradition.

## **Grade 1**

### **Leadership and management**

Religious education has a high profile within the school due to the strong leadership of the subject manager. Monitoring takes place in line with the core curriculum areas and includes scrutiny of planning and pupils' work and class observation. Good feedback is given to staff and areas for development are identified in order to improve teaching and learning. Religious education features on the school improvement plan, but needs to be more focussed on raising attainment. The school is well resourced. Each class is well equipped to deliver the subject. There is a very good central collection of books, posters and artefacts which enhance the teaching of Catholicism and other faiths. Good support is given to staff by the subject manager and the school makes good use of diocesan training and advisory help. Staff work hard to successfully create a stimulating environment which encourages pupils in their work and play. Excellent use is made of high quality displays, framed art work and photographs, to celebrate pupils' work and achievement.

## **Grade 2**