

**Report of the Denominational (Section 48) Inspection of**  
Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

***St Mary's Catholic Primary School***

DFES No: 935/3340  
URN: 124784

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Mr P. Febvre

Headteacher: Mrs M. Etheridge

Denominational Inspector:

Mrs M. Betts

Dates of Inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> February 2012

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## **DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL**

St Mary's is a one form entry primary school with part-time nursery provision, for pupils from 3 to 11 years. Pupils come from the parish of St Mary's as well as from the surrounding parishes of St James, St Pancras and St Thomas of Canterbury. There are 224 pupils on roll, 98% of whom are Catholic. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The majority of the pupils are of white British descent. The percentage of pupils for whom English is an additional language has risen considerably recently and is now nearly 15% which is above the national average.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL.**

### **Grade: 1**

St Mary's School is an outstanding Catholic school. The extremely strong Catholic identity permeates the school's daily life. The committed leadership of the headteacher and governors effectively promotes a strong spiritual purpose within the Catholic ethos. Prayer, mass and worship are of pivotal importance in the school's life. Staff are committed to the very high profile given to religious education.

Relationships within the school are very good and reflect Christian respect and concern for others. Staff create an environment where pupils are respected, listened to and where learning is fun. Pupils are very proud of the school and are appreciative of the strong community created within it. They explained, "We are all part of a big Church family here." The pupils' personal, spiritual and moral development is outstanding and this is reflected in their very good behaviour and positive attitudes to faith awareness and learning. Very good progress is made by pupils in religious education.

The self evaluation of the school is accurate with the headteacher having a good overall view of the school's strengths and development needs. The development issues from the last inspection have been fully addressed and the school has continued to improve. The school regularly seeks the views of staff, parents and pupils on all aspects of their Catholic life. All staff are very committed to the success of the school and work together as a team to implement creative learning opportunities. The school has a very good capacity to continue to improve.

### **What the school needs to do to improve further?**

- Further develop religious education assessment to ensure consistency of judgements by moderating work across the school and recording the criteria by which the judgement was achieved.

### **PUPILS. How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups. **Grade 1****

The extent to which pupils benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. Pupils are very aware of being part of the universal Catholic Church and have links with other Catholic schools across the world. Pupils display respect towards each other and to adults. They willingly undertake responsibilities and show concern for the well-being of others, the older pupils acting as play leaders to the younger ones. Pupils' achievements are recognised, praised and valued. Pupils praise the friendly, caring attitude of the teachers who listen to them and help solve any problems they may have. Their views and ideas are sought and taken into account through the School and Creative Councils.

Pupils respond very well to the prayer life of the school. They understand the importance of Mass and prayer and participate with ease and respect. Pupils create their own prayers and are able to share their own intentions. They enjoy worship and respond sensitively and maturely to the theme. For example the assembly observed was based on Jesus' difficult time in the wilderness and pupils were challenged through meditation to invite Jesus alongside them when they are in a difficult situation. Pupils highly value reflection time given during worship to apply the learning to their own lives and experiences. Pupils' participation through high quality singing and instrument playing greatly enhances worship. Pupils are becoming more involved in the planning and leading of worship such as in preparing their celebration assemblies based on their RE topic. The year 5 children were composing lyrics for a hymn to use during their forthcoming class Mass.

Pupils make very good progress in religious literacy. They are developing a sound knowledge of the Catholic faith and the life of Jesus and are encouraged to increase their depth of spiritual thinking. Pupils are encouraged to express their own ideas and ask pertinent questions. Greater understanding of the Eucharistic prayer was accomplished by year 3 children whilst illustrating a phrase or line in it using oil pastels. Pupils achieve age appropriate levels of attainment and many exceed this. They enjoy their religious education lessons especially those linked to creative and practical activities. Pupils have a positive attitude to learning and work together very well. The books are well presented. Their spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. The very high quality of pupils' music and art skills contribute to their spiritual awareness.

### **LEADERS AND MANAGERS. How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the school? Grade 1**

The headteacher is deeply committed to promoting the school's Catholic life. She communicates a clear vision which inspires all in the school community. Very attractive displays confirm the Catholic identity. Leadership promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development very well. The school has good links with parents and strong links with the church through the close involvement of the parish priest.

The religious education co-ordinator, well supported by the school leadership, ensures this subject has a high profile. A clear direction for improvement has been set. All aspects of religious education teaching and learning are monitored well. The headteacher and one other teacher hold a Catholic RE qualification and another teacher is currently studying for one. The religious education co-ordinator provides support and guidance to teachers. The budget for this subject is high and in line with other core subjects. Reflective story telling is provided as an extra resource for learning.

Governors fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities. They are very supportive and pro-active in the school. They are well informed about the work of the school through the headteacher's regular report. They attend Diocesan training and join staff training. For example, recently they devised a common understanding of gospel values and how they are lived out by the school community. When governors visit the school they record the monitoring formally. The former RE governor monitored the RE curriculum and lessons and the new RE governor will continue to do so.

The school is a welcoming inclusive community where all members are respected and valued. Diversity is celebrated and parents and pupils from other cultures share their traditions, their dances and food. Pupils show compassion for others by the extent of their charity work. During Lent they aim to provide their link school in Cambodia with a fresh water reservoir. The pupils sing at a local home for the elderly. Pupils regularly clear litter

from the local area. Provision for spiritual development effectively provides opportunities for pupils to link the theme with their own experiences. The school invites parishioners and parents to share celebrations. Pupils learn about other world religions. They visit a local gurdwara and invite visitors into school to promote this learning.

### **PROVISION. How effective is the provision for Catholic education: Grade 1**

Provision for worship, prayer and Mass is outstanding and central to the life of the school community. Mass is celebrated regularly in whole school and class groupings. In addition the older children attend the parish Mass once a month. Younger pupils hold liturgies appropriate to their age led by the priest. Pupils have opportunities for confession twice a year in Advent and Lent. Whole school Celebration assemblies are held regularly and parents are invited. Attendance is high. These are based on RE learning. At the end of the recent topic of celebration the year 6 children composed power point presentations to explain the funeral Mass. Worship is well planned and uses visual presentations and Bible stories very effectively to develop learners' thinking. Attractive holy tables are in each classroom and pupils often contribute artefacts such as in year 3 where pupils have added their own precious possessions to share. The parish priest makes a powerful contribution to the sacramental life of the school.

The quality of religious education lessons overall is good with some outstanding lessons observed. Teachers' knowledge is sound and they plan thoroughly with clear learning intentions made explicit to pupils. During the best lessons, teachers inspire pupils to be interested and motivated to learn, by conveying their own enthusiasm and by the use of practical activities. Open questioning is used very effectively to challenge the pupils' depth of thought. Pupils of all abilities make progress in lessons through well differentiated activities, mixed ability groupings and by extra support given. All work is marked with challenging questions to extend the learning further. Pupils are given time to respond to these. Assessments take place regularly and are linked to national RE levels of attainment. Further moderation of judgements is a planned future development.

The quality of the curriculum is very good, and suitable for the age and abilities of the learners. It fulfils the requirement of the Bishops' Conference. 10% of curriculum time is used for religious education following the "Here I Am" programme and enriched by additional resources. The school is presently trialling part of the new RE Curriculum for Catholic Primary Schools. Pupils are encouraged to become aware of the demands of religious commitment. Religious education is creatively linked to other curriculum areas such as literacy, art, drama, song and information and communication technology (ICT). The church is effectively used as an extra resource for learning. Other faiths are studied and visitors and visits to other faith places of worship aid the learning. The curriculum contributes very well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Attractive religious education displays give added value to this core subject.

The inspector wishes to thank the headteacher, staff and children for their very warm welcome and for contributing to her very enjoyable and interesting visit.

**Letter to pupils explaining the findings from the diocesan inspection.**

21<sup>st</sup> February 2012

Dear Pupils

**Diocesan Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School.**

Thank you for making me so welcome at your school. Thank you to all those pupils who spoke to me especially the group from Year 6. I was very interested in your views of your school. I enjoyed being present at Reception, Year 2, Year 3, Year 5 and Year 6 Religious Education lessons. It was a great privilege for me to share in Year 2 liturgy and in your Prayer and Praise assembly where you demonstrated your very high skills and enjoyment of singing and instrument playing. Well done to everyone involved.

Here are some of the things I especially liked:

- The strong Catholic ethos of your school that provides many opportunities for prayer, worship and Mass.
- You are friendly and considerate to each other and are well cared for by your teachers.
- The school provides very good opportunities for you to enjoy your learning and develop personally, spiritually and morally.

I have asked your teachers when awarding you a RE level to check that their judgement for your attainment is consistent across the school.

Thank you again for your help. I wish you the very best for the future,

Yours sincerely

Mrs M. Betts  
Diocesan Inspector