



# **DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT**

incorporating Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the  
Archbishop of Southwark

**URN 101799**

**St Mary's Catholic Infant School**

**Bedford Park**

**Croydon CR0 2AQ**

**Inspection date: 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

**Chair of Governors: Ms Marcella Touray**

**Headteacher: Ms Linda O'Callaghan**

**Inspectors: Mrs Janette Mann**

**Mr Damian Fox**

## **EDUCATION COMMISSION**

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR  
Tel 01689 829331

**Interim Director of Education: Mr Stephen Bryan**

**DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION  
AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**



## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

## FULL REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's Catholic Infants School is part of a Multi Academy Trust situated in the London Borough of Croydon. The school is situated in the Croydon Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. The principal parish which the school serves is St Mary's, Our Lady of Reparation, West Croydon. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 92%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10%.

The school is a two-form entry school, taking pupils from 3 to 7 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 215, including 39 in the nursery. The baseline attainment of pupils entering the school in Nursery in 2017 is 62% below average and 15% significantly below. In Reception the baseline is 59% below and 8% significantly below. A significant number come with little or no knowledge of English. Pupil Premium Funding is received by about 17% of pupils. This is artificially low because a large number of parents are new to the country and therefore do not have full knowledge of their entitlements, or the ability to claim benefits.

The school covers a large socially and ethnically diverse catchment area that has high levels of unemployment and deprivation. A significant number of pupils, 30%, are currently housed in temporary accommodation. 16% of the pupils receive extra support in class for their Special Educational Needs (SEN), and 3% of children currently have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). A very high proportion of pupils, 89%, have English as an Additional Language (EAL), and the majority of pupils join the school with a low level of English fluency. There are 35 different languages currently represented within the school. The proportion of the school population from an ethnic minority group is high at 95%.

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS



St Mary's is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- The visionary Executive Headteacher supported by a cohesive, strong group of leaders and governors and a flexible, intuitive staff, has created a school with a vibrant curriculum and outstanding pastoral and academic care.
- Strong parish links mean that parish and school are one family working together to build a visible Catholic presence within the community.
- Pupils are versatile, co-operative and independent, make choices based on Catholic values and are completely immersed in their faith journey.
- Parents who are overwhelmingly supportive and appreciative of the Catholic life provided for their children making comments such as "Great staff. Great pupils. Great Catholic values. I love this school," and ... "A piece of heaven"

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Continue, as part of the school's own self-evaluation, to develop assessment without levels in Religious Education in line with other subjects using Diocesan guidance.
- To continue to develop pupil-led chaplaincy so that pupils are confident in planning and leading liturgy.

Publication Date 9th May 2018



## Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

1

## Catholic Life

1

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

1

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

1

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

1

## Religious Education

1

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

1

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

1

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

1

## Collective Worship

1

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

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

1

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## CATHOLIC LIFE

1

### **The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding**

- A warm welcome awaits any visitor who enters St Mary's. The Catholic ethos is strongly evident in the 'learning family' of the school where expectations are high and all "Aspire not to have more, but to be more." Everyone's unique talents and skills are believed in and shared and collaboration is highly prized. They grow in faith, love and togetherness.
- Pupils, staff and governors at St Mary's appreciate and value its Catholic Life, wholeheartedly participating with enthusiasm and pride in its liturgies and celebrations. One highlight of many is the procession followed by a picnic in the school to celebrate St Mary's Feast day.
- Pupils grow in faith together, contributing to its Catholic Life by contributing to class prayer books, preparing and leading prayers and class liturgies for the school and their families. For example, Year 2 pupils write thanksgiving prayers for their Leavers' Mass.
- Pupils take responsibility within the school and are provided with opportunities to evaluate their school life. The elected School Council were asked to find ways to make St Mary's better. They receive fundraising ideas from each class in school and then make a decision about how to proceed. They keep the school informed about their work with their School Council News. The pupils planned and ran the Summer Fayre last year. All pupils are asked to have responsibility for looking after lonely or upset pupils around the school.
- Liturgies and events, like International Afternoon (where families share national food), enable pupils to share their cultures and traditions and treat each other with politeness and co-operation. This is reinforced by learning about other faiths practiced by those in the community during 'Other Faith Weeks.' As a consequence of the pupils' knowledge and understanding of their very diverse community, their behaviour is exemplary.
- The pupils' know they have a responsibility to care for others. This is evident in their support of a number of charities. During Lent the school collects for Missio and in May the choir take part in the Good Shepherd Day at Aylesford.
- Parish links are very strong. Pupils and the school choir will join in the parish Mission Masses. Year 2 serve the senior citizens of the parish at the Harvest Tea. One of the Parish Priests said, "School is an extension of the Church."
- Pupils understand their own vocation. They offer their services to the community and are in high demand by local businesses for their carol singing. They help the local Blind Association with their lunches.



- Parents are welcomed into the school and regularly enjoy attending liturgies and celebrations. They wholeheartedly support and appreciate the Catholic Way of Life that St Mary's promotes. One parent summed up the feelings of many .... "The spirituality is wonderful in this school; we are so pleased that our children are here. The services are amazing and 'Carols by candlelight' was one of our best experiences, our children are thriving."

### **The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding**

- The provision for the Catholic Life of the school is a high priority. The values expressed in the Mission Statement clearly lie at the heart of St Mary's. The school places great emphasis on pupils being versatile, creative and confident; they value pupils as individuals and prepare them to adapt to a challenging world. The school motto, 'Learning to Love – Loving to Learn' drives their expectations.
- Staff wholeheartedly promote and enthusiastically participate in the Catholic Life of the school, leading by example and ensuring that all relationships within the community show warmth, trust and courtesy. They enhance their understanding through training and by sharing liturgies and prayers. For example, they take part in weekly morning staff liturgies reflecting on the theme for the week.
- Staff in the Infant and Junior schools work closely together to ensure coherence in spiritual and academic aspects of the Multi Academy Trust, through joint celebrations, meetings and moderation.
- The school is nurturing chaplaincy by helping pupils to write prayers for worship and to lead liturgies. This might now be developed to widen pupils' remit to enhancing Catholic Life, perhaps organising celebrations, preparing areas for worship, deciding on events for Feast Days, working with faith groups within the Juniors, being responsible for community events.
- The Parish Priests are regular and invaluable visitors to the school, offering guidance, encouragement and support to pupils and staff. One said, "Catholicity is in its veins!"
- Eye-catching and meaningful artwork covers every area inside and out of St Mary's. This greatly enhances the Catholic ethos and includes wall plaques of each class' patron saint, a beautiful statue of Our lady, a free-standing Romero cross made by the pupils in the hall and a Lenten Intentions Board with the pupils' promises.
- The website is very informative and attractive. It would be even more effective if it described and explained the many Catholic events that take place in the school community.
- Pupils are treated with kindness and care. Pastoral programmes are based on Catholic teachings and principles, run by skilled staff and cater for the needs of all pupils.
- The school works closely with many of its families, giving help at information evenings, phonics and language workshops and advice on a range of practical matters, like filling in school application forms. A parent-led Nursery Project and 'Stay and Play' sessions make parents feel welcome at St Mary's. All of these are well attended and parents said how much they really appreciated them.



- The active Parent and Friends Association provides a strong social link for the community, for example, when they decided on a barn dance to bring everyone together. They are always responsive to requests for help and work with the staff to support events like the Christmas Fayre or Feast Day Picnic.

### **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding**

- Leaders and the Governing Body, have a clear vision and love of Catholic education which ensures that, through reflection and challenge, their high aspirations mature everyone's spiritual and moral development. They are presently working to embed the Multi Academy Mission Statement and to strengthen links with smaller parishes.
- High quality and experienced leadership underpins the success of St Mary's. The inspirational and progressive Executive Headteacher ensures that the Catholic ethos is reflected in all aspects of school life. Together with the Deputy Headteacher she has supported other Catholic schools in the Diocese. The Executive Headteacher works closely with the highly effective and motivated Religious Education Leader and Senior Leadership Team to create rich and varied opportunities for the community to grow in faith.
- Governors have an excellent knowledge and understanding of St Mary's because they have a very high profile and presence in the school. They attend liturgies, have conversations with parents and staff, share Learning Walks, attend many meetings and have regular updates about the Catholic life of the school at governor meetings. The governors are well known to parents who have confidence that they can approach them and that they will respond to their requests or problems.
- Training for staff in staff meetings, with other Catholic schools and in Diocesan conferences is well-thought out and enhances their understanding and commitment to the Church's educational mission. The staff joined with other Catholic Croydon Teachers at Inset training in a Creative Religious Education Day and developed themes for Holy Week. The inclusion Manager and the Religious Education leader ensure that new staff to the school feel welcome, included and trained.
- The well-being of the caring, supportive and cohesive staff team is very high. They like and appreciate the opportunities they are given to reflect on their spirituality and their professionalism, meetings begin with a prayer.
- St Mary's successfully engages and integrates parents in school life by keeping them well-informed about events that are happening in school and the community in newsletters and on the web-site. The school could also consider using the newsletters or web-site to explain Catholic themes, scripture and liturgical seasons to parents to help them aid their children's understanding. Parents said that their views were listened to and any problems were sorted out. In response to a parent questionnaire, the school office found out parents' preferred form of communication and acted accordingly to maximise their contact.



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

### How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding

- The pupils, many with lower than expected communication and language skills and from areas of social deprivation, make very good progress in Religious Education which is a testament to the care and support they are given by the school.
- The number of pupils reaching the expected standard in Religious Education by the end of Year 2 is in line with those achieved in English and Maths which in turn are in line with the expected standards achieved nationally. The number achieving the higher level of achievement in Religious Education is above those achieving in school and nationally for English and Maths. Pupils who have additional needs have targeted and effective support and make expected progress.
- St Mary's responds to pupil's needs to boost achievement and progress with challenging questions, focused intervention groups for speech and language, by pre-teaching religious vocabulary and increasing the number of parents attending curriculum evenings.
- In class, pupils made it clear that they enjoyed their Religious Education. They listen attentively and make good use of religious vocabulary. They know the stories of the Bible very well and have an excellent knowledge of the parts of the Mass. They talked to each other and readily shared their ideas, working with a partner or in a group.
- Pupils show great pride and respect for their written work which is evident from their beautiful Religious Education books in Key Stage 1 which show coverage, breadth and a variety of recorded activities.
- In Key Stage 1 pupils respond to their teachers' written and verbal feedback and know how well they are doing and, in answering questions about how they can make it better, know what to do next to improve. In the Early Years, special moments are recognised and captured on Proud Clouds on display in class.
- Pupils work with enthusiasm, eagerness and complete involvement. All were working together in harmony, making choices about their challenges and revelling in their successes. Consequently, behaviour is excellent because the pupils apply themselves in lessons, strive to do their best and work well by themselves and with others.



## The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding

- Effective assessments of learning are made, with staff taking into account ongoing verbal and written observations as well as formal assessment three times a year. Assessments are moderated between the Infant and Junior Schools and within Catholic schools in Croydon to ensure accuracy and are clearly linked to planning to ensure that building on prior learning enables pupils to fulfil their potential.
- The Religious Education leader and Deputy Headteacher are developing assessment without levels in line with other subjects using Diocesan guidance.
- Staff observe and give feedback to help pupils assess their achievement and to plan their next steps. They inform, encourage and praise pupils with written developmental comments and pupils react appropriately but they consider learning conversations to be their most effective tool for pupil improvement.
- Pupils enjoy receiving Star of the Week, Best Boy and Girl of the week awards, the Caring Cup and weekly Golden Table invitations, all of which celebrate success and kindness and foster tolerance, manners and respect.
- Staff work together to plan, team-teach and observe their colleagues; in this way, they share their talents, enthusiasm and resources with an open willingness to learn from and inspire each other. Meaningful guidance from the Religious Education leader is highly valued.
- Training for staff on marking, assessment without levels, moderation and developing RE through art keeps the staff up-to-date with new initiatives and best practice. Staff are currently researching how to develop a community of learners with active involvement of pupils and parents.
- Teaching is effective and purposeful and many outstanding features were observed:
  - the use of scripture to underline the theme
  - the emphasis on the meaning of the Mass and its parts
  - the well-judged pace of delivery which maintained pupils interest and enthusiasm
  - the way prior learning was reinforced throughout the lessons
  - high expectations, challenging tasks and thought-provoking dialogue
  - the space given to pupils to make their own learning choices in the execution of their tasks
  - the relationships within the class built on care and mutual respect
- Teachers' flexibility allows them to creatively combine subjects, including Religious Education, throughout the day to match pupils' needs. Their flair produces well-balanced, interesting and differentiated lessons which promote engagement and interest. Pupils are encouraged to be problem-solvers, either independently or with others. Topics were made relevant to pupils who were called upon to relate what they learnt in lessons to their own lives and experiences, for example, the importance of saying thank you in their family.



- Teaching Assistants were well-briefed and worked instinctively and patiently to help pupils of all abilities to optimise their learning.
- High quality resources, like Gospel story books and materials for the Romero cross, are bought by the school as needed.

### **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding**

- St Mary's meets the requirements of the Bishop's Conference in terms of schemes used and the time allocated to Religious Education.
- The curriculum is thoughtfully adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. The scheme for Religious Education, 'Come and See' is implemented effectively and is augmented and enriched with additional material; other subjects are integrated seamlessly with Religious Education throughout the day in a free-flowing medley of learning activities.
- Leaders have a strong commitment to self-reflection which ensures the use of a range of systematic and productive monitoring activities to improve teaching and learning. For example, book scrutinies by staff identified the need for the pupils to write more of their own prayers which resulted in each class having a prayer book to which pupils can contribute at home, parents enjoy seeing and sharing the books.
- The Governing Body takes a passionate interest in St Mary's and through meetings with the subject leader, teaching and learning reviews, target-setting reviews and monitoring meetings they can be confident in their knowledge and understanding of the teaching and learning in Religious Education and the progress of pupils. They are updated on new initiatives and are committed to ensuring that assessment without levels maintains or improves the progress of pupils in Religious Education. They are extremely supportive but also confident and questioning in their approach.
- The experienced, Religious Education link governor works closely and effectively with the Religious Education leader and because of their productive dialogue is able to comment and make suggestions about the delivery and direction of the subject. The governor helps in classes, attends liturgies, conducts book scrutinies in which the parity of books between classes was looked at and assesses the inclusion of Religious Education in all areas of school life.
- The Religious Education Leader is an excellent role model for other teachers and has committed spiritual purpose. She is held in high esteem and her calm supportive manner has developed positive relationships with staff who respect and appreciate her advice. She attends Diocesan training, meetings and conferences and liaises with other local Catholic schools to share best practice on, for example, moderation and marking. She gives feedback to staff and governors to improve the delivery and outcomes for Religious Education.



- The school enriches the curriculum with a programme of visits, visitors and creative activities which engages and motivates pupils and helps them to enjoy their learning, for example, trips to the Polka Theatre and visits from Safari Pete and his animals and after school clubs. The school welcome visitors of Other Faiths. The Forest School enhances younger pupils' experiences of being in and celebrating God's world; they were seen digging for treasure, appreciating the outside environment, taking pride in their discoveries and developing long-term curiosity.
- Written reports, parent evenings and informal meetings keep parents up-to-date with the learning and development of their children in Religious Education. In excellent class blogs on the website, parents are given information about the week's work in Religious Education and ideas about how they can help. A parent said, " My child loves coming to school every day and it is because of the wonderful teaching at St Mary's. There is a real community feel too."

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## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

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

- Acts of worship, prayer, liturgy and celebrations are weaved throughout St Mary's. There are many opportunities throughout the day for pupils to pray together or by themselves, irrespective of their ability or cultural background.
- Pupils are very keen to lead acts of worship; they help to prepare their weekly Class Liturgies presenting the Gospel through drama, singing, artwork and prayer. This preparation by pupils could be further developed. Appreciative family and friends are invited.
- In a liturgy observed during the inspection, a Year 2 class told the story of the Last Supper, reinforcing their current Religious Education topic with readings, prayers and drama. They explained the relevance of the Eucharistic Prayer and soloists sang a very moving Sanctus. Pupils listened with reverence and respect and departed the liturgy with an exuberant song.
- Pupils readily join in with formal prayers of the Church and are able to offer spontaneous prayers for their own intentions and those of the wider community in words that make sense to them. They are able to reflect in silence and to discuss themes with their response partners when they are given 'Time to Think' in assemblies. Pupils choose to pray voluntarily in the tranquil hall prayer corner, they pin strips of fabric on the Resurrection tree to offer up their own intentions and they write their own heartfelt prayers in their class Prayer Book ..... "Pray for the children and the people who have died in Syria recently".
- Liturgies, prayer tables and school displays help the pupils to understand the seasons and feasts of the Catholic liturgical year, like the Lenten Intentions Board, displays and cloths in liturgical colours and the Remembrance Assembly for which the pupils made a poppy wreath in November. Events in other cultures and faiths, like Chinese New Year, are also prominently displayed.
- Each classroom has an attractive and meaningful prayer area which is used as a spiritual focal point. Candles lit in Religious Education lessons signify the lesson's specialness.

### The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding

- Acts of worship provided by St Mary's reflect the Catholic character of the school in their depth and variety. The different cultural backgrounds of the community inside and outside the school are taken into account, everyone feels included.
- Collective Worship is planned, led and evaluated by knowledgeable, skilled and passionate staff with a clear message and purpose. They encourage the pupils to reflect on and learn from experiences outside their own life. They support them to take an active role in planning and delivering class liturgies. Recently, staff had an Inset Day with other Catholic schools in Croydon on developing school liturgy through prayer and song.



- Pupils attend St Mary's Church for many events, including prayers to celebrate the feast day of their class Patron Saint, delivery of foods after the Harvest collection and carols by candlelight at Christmas.
- Daily Collective Worship is either whole school or class based and makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual and moral development. It can reflect on the themes of peace, respect, love and faith which define 'St Mary's Way', British Values such as kindness, the Sunday Gospel, the Word of God linked to the Come and See programme and it celebrates the achievement of pupils.
- St Mary's organises other assemblies including a talk from a CAFOD representative who helped the pupils to understand their chosen fundraising activity providing water pumps for Zimbabwe.
- The Parish Priests are welcomed by the pupils, staff and governors of the school. They regularly visit for assemblies, class prayers and conversation.
- St Mary's provides attractive areas in school for prayer, like the prayer corner in the hall and small grotto to Mary in the KS1 playground. Outside, there is a covered garden area where the community share liturgies and celebrations and gather for the Feast Day Liturgy.
- Parents are invited to Rosary in October, Stations of the Cross in Lent, class liturgies and assemblies and the school Feast day. Year 2 parents attend the Leavers' Mass. Parents feel very welcome and are enthusiastic in their praise. They particularly enjoy Carols by Candlelight. One parent confirmed the impact school worship has at home, the child saying, "We have to pray before we go to bed."

#### **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding**

- The provision for Collective Worship is a high priority for Leaders and Governors. They have a deep understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts. Throughout the school there is a strong sense of the traditions of the Church and its Catholic heritage.
- Their expertise enables them to accurately self-evaluate the delivery and effect of Collective Worship and to plan for its improvement. For example, governors were keen for the school to increase joint acts of worship with the Juniors and this is now happening.
- Leaders provide professional development opportunities, advice and assistance for staff on planning and delivering collective worship. Recently, staff worked with other Catholic Croydon schools on the structure of assemblies and how pupils can take responsibility for their liturgy. The Governor and the Religious Education Leader, following training together, worked on school displays like the Advent Calendar boxes which enriched the Christmas Liturgy and were loved by all.
- Leaders by their behaviour, attitude and practice are very effective and inspiring role models for pupils and staff. They work hard to promote and provide thought provoking and accessible collective worship for the whole community of St Mary's.