



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and Inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
of the Education Act 2005

URN 101799

St Mary's Catholic Infant School
Bedford Park
Croydon
CR0 2AQ

Inspection date: 19 June 2013

Chair of Governors:	Mr Stuart White
Headteacher:	Ms Linda O'Callaghan
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EDUCATION COMMISSION

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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St Mary's Catholic Infant School is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Croydon Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Croydon LA. The principal parish which the school serves is Our Lady of Reparation, West Croydon. The proportion of pupils who are Baptised Catholics is 99%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in Key Stage 1.

The school takes pupils from 3 to 7 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 225. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is below national and LA averages. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is around average. 30% of pupils are on the school's register as having special educational needs, including 5 pupils with statements of special educational needs. Pupils come from a wide range of social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. Over 95% of pupils come from homes where English is an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

GRADE

1

St Mary's is an outstanding Catholic school. It is a warm and welcoming community caring for all its members. It provides an attractive and well-resourced learning environment and a rich curriculum which engages and enthuses its pupils. Religious Education and the Catholic ethos of the school are all-pervasive in the curriculum, environment, policies and practice. Pupils make excellent progress during their time at the school and achieve well. Despite low attainment on entry, the great majority meet or exceed national expectations by the end of Key Stage 1. The Headteacher leads a strong staff team fully committed to the ethos of the school. Her drive and determination ensure high standards throughout the school and a constant mission of school improvement, within an environment of mutual respect and concern for others.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and speak of it as 'a family'. They are polite and well behaved and very proud of their school.

The school has worked hard to involve parents and carers in many aspects of school life. A Reception class liturgy actively involved parents in part of the liturgy, as each parent brought up a candle and spoke movingly of a particular friend. Parents are helped to support their children's education and feel welcome in school. They are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and value the Catholic education it provides. One family wrote "Only a special school like ours with religion at the core can offer this level of education. We are truly grateful for all that the teachers do."

Governors provide an effective role of support and challenge and are very much part of school life. They attend events and celebrations and fulfil their role of 'critical friend.'

All the areas for development noted in the last inspection have been fully addressed.

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- Work towards further increasing the percentage of outstanding Religious Education lessons, sharing best practice and developing closely focused lesson observations to help achieve this.

The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

GRADE 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders and managers at all levels are deeply committed to the school's mission statement and to delivering the best education in a strong faith community. The Headteacher is an inspirational role model and has created a dedicated and cohesive staff team. All know that the Catholic mission of the school and the spiritual and moral development of the pupils are of prime importance. This is reflected in the school development plan and all school policies. Governors are fully aware of their role of support and challenge. They are conversant with school data and monitor pupil progress on a regular basis. Governing body minutes regularly record discussions regarding the strategic direction of the school, the Religious Education curriculum and its impact and the Catholic life of the school. Governors are frequent visitors to the school and fulfil an effective monitoring role. School self-evaluation of the Catholic life of the school and Religious Education is accurate and reflective and informs the school development plan. Parents are very much part of the school community and are involved in many aspects of school life as well as supporting the education of the pupils. Pupils are aware of the school's aims and are keen to play an active part of this caring and effective Catholic Community.

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

GRADE 1

Prayer, worship and liturgy are central to the life of the school. During the inspection two liturgies were seen, both of which were of a very high standard. Children were fully engaged in prayer and reflection through carefully structured elements which helped them to understand theological and doctrinal concepts. The liturgies were held in an atmosphere of respect and joy in worshipping together and illustrated deep spiritual engagement on the part of children, staff and parents.

Within lessons children had opportunities to pause and think about the content of the lesson, which they did with sincerity. Formal prayers as well as personal reflections were observed. Classes and communal areas contained statues, icons, candles, pictures and prayers to strengthen pupils' awareness of the importance of prayer in school life and beyond. The recent death of a pupil has been treated with empathy and understanding and has become a focus for togetherness for the whole school community as they join in prayer and concern for the family.

Children's books also show evidence of children being encouraged to write their own prayers and to offer prayers for a variety of reasons and circumstances.

All staff and governors' meetings begin with prayer and reflection, providing adults too with a sense of the importance of praying together.

Community cohesion

GRADE 1

The school is an inclusive community caring for all its members within the school and beyond. The school has high expectations of all its pupils, regardless of ability or ethnic group; all are supported and encouraged to achieve their full potential. 'We do our best every day' is very much part of the school culture. The diversity of the school community is celebrated throughout the school in attractive displays and artefacts as well as in celebratory events. The school provides outreach support to another school in the area and works closely with other schools and community groups. It participates in local arts festivals and sporting events. Links with schools in Poland, Asia and schools in other areas of the UK help pupils to understand that they are part of a much wider community. The school values of caring for others and recognising the needs of others are extended to fundraising for a range of charities, including CAFOD, NSPCC and LEPR. The school

has a good relationship with the Diocese, attending conferences, courses, events and coordinator meetings.

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Religious Education

Achievement and standards in Religious Education

GRADE 1

Data provided by the school indicates that pupils' attainment in Religious Education is in line with standards for Literacy and represents a very high rate of pupil progress. This is particularly commendable given pupils' low attainment on entry to the school.

Through observed lessons, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of pupils' work, the effect of high expectations on outcomes is clearly evident. Teachers expect pupils to think reflectively and to be able to articulate their thoughts in words and actions. Pupils rise to the challenge and clearly want to do well. Children's books show evidence of a range of high quality activities designed to facilitate thinking skills and insight. This is strengthened by the teachers' marking which contains a balance of positive comments, points for improvement and reflective questioning which provides an effective dialogue between teacher and pupil. The supporting creative work adds vibrancy and spirit to the Religious Education workbooks. This could be improved further simply by changing to a larger format exercise book, as the current size restricts pupils' responses and creative work.

The wide variety of religious artwork and creative projects evident throughout the school adds further strength to the sense of high standards that all pupils are expected to achieve. This, coupled with the pupils' knowledge that adults believe in their ability to achieve, ensures that all pupils have a positive focus upon the highest standards.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

GRADE 1

Teaching and learning in Religious Education is of a very high standard. Evidence includes lesson observations and work in pupils' books, as well as the school's own comprehensive system of monitoring and assessment.

During the inspection, four lessons were observed. Of these, two were outstanding and two were securely good with outstanding features. All lessons met pupils' needs with clear and appropriate differentiation throughout. Support assistants were used effectively. Skilful questioning was used to deepen pupils' understanding and to provide opportunities for reflection. Pupils were encouraged to relate the message of the Religious Education lesson to their own lives. Strategies such as making videos, the use of talk partners and craft activities enhanced the learning experience. Pupils were clearly interested and engaged and enjoyed the Religious Education lessons. Behaviour was exemplary throughout. Parents are informed regarding Religious Education topics and encouraged to support their children. One commented that she had learned more about her own faith through her children's work at school.

The school should now work towards making all Religious Education lessons outstanding, using sharing best practice and closely focused lesson observations.

The Religious Education curriculum

GRADE 1

The school meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in offering 10% of the week's teaching time to Religious Education. It follows the "Come and See" programme of Religious Education, which has recently been introduced throughout the school. The study of other faiths is timetabled at regular intervals during the school year and is enhanced by visitors to the school and outside visits. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of activities and learning opportunities and offers an effective level of challenge to all pupils. Religious Education is a central element of the school's curriculum, with creative approaches leading to other curriculum areas being involved during Religious Education lessons. During the inspection, links were observed being made with Science, PHSE and Art. Children's books displayed clear evidence of Religious Education being

linked with Literacy. The school development plan demonstrates that Religious Education is also part of many areas of the curriculum.

Discussions with the School Council showed that pupils were able to identify connections with Religious Education and other curriculum areas, as well as acknowledging its contribution to helping them manage aspects of their friendships. The pupils were keen to emphasise the 'learning choices' offered them by teachers which extended from their Religious Education lessons to all parts of the curriculum. Pupils have a strong sense of spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning through their work, their relationships with others and their conduct in and around the school. The development of the school's physical environment, both inside and outside, further enhances the pupils' sense of awe and wonder, capitalising on their natural curiosity in exploring the wonder of God's creation and what He has made possible. Indoor and outdoor areas are fully utilised and evident in curriculum planning and add great enjoyment to pupils' learning.

Leadership and management of Religious Education

GRADE 1

Leadership and management of Religious Education is of a very high standard. The Headteacher is the subject leader and ensures that Religious Education is at the heart of all school policy and practice, as well as achieving high standards of teaching and learning throughout the school. Pupil assessment is embedded in school practice, with regular assessment and moderation of pupils' work. Moderation is carried out internally, in staff meetings and externally, at cluster meetings with other Catholic schools. Monitoring of lessons, book and planning scrutinies form part of the school's monitoring cycle, with records kept in the coordinator's file.

Monitoring and assessment form part of school self-evaluation and inform strategic planning. Governors are well informed regarding progress in Religious Education and contribute to monitoring e.g. learning walks to assess the impact of the new 'Come and See' Religious Education scheme.

Religious Education is well resourced and organised. All classrooms have attractive prayer focus areas which display modern, age appropriate artefacts and books at an appropriate level for the pupils.