



# **DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT**

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

**URN 100636**

**St Mary's Catholic Primary School**

**Crescent Lane**

**Clapham**

**London**

**SW4 9QJ**

**Inspection date: 7<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

**Chair of Governors: Lynette Murphy O'Dwyer**

**Headteacher: Karen Pluckrose**

**Inspectors: Janette Mann**

**Patrick Moloney**

## **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 Primary School is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Lambeth deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Lambeth Local Authority. The principal parish which the school serves is St Mary's, Clapham. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 97%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is at least 10% in all Key Stages.

The school takes pupils from 3 to 11 years. The school has one and a half forms of entry. The number of pupils currently on roll is 312 plus 27 pupils in the nursery. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly average, though a significant number come with little or no knowledge of English. Pupil Premium Funding is received by 20% of pupils. The school covers a large socially and ethnically diverse catchment area that has some high levels of unemployment and deprivation. Around 10% of the pupils receive extra support in class for their Special Educational Needs (SEN). A very high proportion of pupils, 65%, have English as an Additional Language (EAL), 62% of pupils are on the lower stages of English fluency. There are 31 different languages currently represented within the school; English is the most common first language followed by Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, French and Italian. The proportion of the school population from an ethnic minority group is high at 86%.

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Mary's is an Outstanding Catholic school because:

- The spiritual moral, social and cultural elements of the Catholic faith are woven seamlessly into the fabric of St Mary's school day, term and year. The school believes that learning is a gift from God and is committed to developing each child's potential. Everyone in the school appreciates and values its Catholic life, wholeheartedly supporting its liturgies, celebrations and events. The school is very proud of its long history and its Catholic heritage.
- The dedicated Headteacher has developed a staff culture of self-reflection which galvanises ideas and research into effective learning situations. She is ably assisted by a passionate and inspirational Religious Education leader and a committed Senior Leadership Team. Together with a confident Governing Body, a much-valued Parish Priest and staff that work in an open and trusting way, they have made worship and prayer the driving forces which produce such excellent spiritual and academic outcomes.
- The pupils thrive in a stimulating environment where they are well cared for, treated with respect and expected to do their best. Performance and effort are rewarded. They enthusiastically immerse themselves in lessons and liturgies, working with others and by themselves with ease. They plan, organise, lead and participate fully in the Catholic Life of the school. They are expert at bringing their own experiences to their prayers and relating their meditations on the Word of God to their own lives. They understand the need to help others in the Parish and the wider community.
- Parents expressed overwhelming support for the school's work. "My child, although only 5 years old, has grown in her faith so much in her time at St Mary's." They are welcomed into the school and enjoy sharing liturgies, celebrations and events with their children.

## WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

There are no significant areas for improvement, however:

- the school should continue to develop assessment without levels in Religious Education in line with other subjects using Diocesan guidance
- the school should expand their teaching of other Faiths to includes trips to places of Worship and inviting those of other Faiths into the school.

## 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



## 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 of the school is strongly evident in the relationships of everyone in its community; they treat each other with love, mutual respect and loyalty. Everyone has high expectations and takes great pride in achieving their potential, believing that 'if something is worth doing, it is worth doing well'.
- Pupils, staff and governors in St Mary's appreciate and value its Catholic Life, wholeheartedly participating with enthusiasm and pride in its liturgies and celebrations such as the feast day of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, the patron of the school, which is celebrated with an outdoor procession
- Pupils grow in faith together, contributing to its Catholic Life by preparing and leading prayers, celebrations and Mass. The 'Growing in Faith Together' (GIFT) group prepare and lead liturgies including the First Holy Communion and Leavers' Masses in school. They also visit classes to help pupils understand and reflect on the 'Wednesday Word,' which is circulated weekly to families. The choir chooses and prepares hymns for Masses and liturgies.
- St Mary's has a diverse community with a wide range of cultures and backgrounds. Events, like 'International Food Afternoon' ensure that pupils share their cultures, celebrating and taking pride in their differences. They understand that their behaviour is a reflection of the school's Catholic ethos. This is reinforced by learning about other people's beliefs during Other Faith Weeks.
- Pupils understand their own vocation as Catholics. They offer their services to the local community by singing in a local nursing home and the choir are honoured to be invited to support the Royal Trinity Hospice Carol Service. Pupils in each class take ownership of their Lenten fundraising endeavours by finding creative ways in which to raise money including raffles and cake sales for, amongst others, Mary's Meals and Cafod. They can link this fundraising with what they learn in Religious Education.
- The School Council take the lead in school and the wider community, for example, they organised and judged a school anti-bullying poster competition and they joined the priests and brothers at St Mary's Church to lay a wreath at the local War Memorial. It was the School Council's idea to sell socks in aid of the Ace of Clubs charity.



- Parents appreciate how St Mary's empowers its pupils, with one saying "Children are given opportunities to help others; at school, Upper Juniors making time to play with Infants at break, for example; and beyond, learning about people less fortunate and taking charitable action to help."

### **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 school's Mission Statement, which are regularly reviewed by the Governors and Senior Leaders, clearly lie at the heart of St Mary's; the school believes that learning is a gift of God and this underpins all their efforts as they strive to create a stimulating environment in which effort and success are highly prized.
- Staff wholeheartedly promote and enthusiastically participate in the Catholic Life of the school, enhancing their understanding through training, for example, at Deanery liturgies, conferences and retreats. They are exemplary role models and ensure that all relationships within the community show warmth, trust and courtesy.
- The Parish Priest and members of religious orders are regular and invaluable visitors to the school, offering guidance, encouragement and support to pupils and staff.
- Pupils are treated with kindness and care and are well-supported through, bilingual classroom support staff, supportive therapy with a counsellor, social and life skills intervention and financial assistance for offsite learning, music and sport.
- The school holds Family Learning classes to help parents to support their children. Parents appreciated the e-safety training provided. Spiritually, parents benefit by attending the wealth of liturgies to which they are invited. St Mary's dedication is summed up by one parent who said, "The staff at St Mary's have been so helpful and supportive to both me and my family during the last few months when we needed it most."
- The Catholic Life of the school is well highlighted, described and illustrated on the website. In school, it is further enhanced by displays relating to the liturgical year and artwork, for example, a beautiful mosaic broadcasts the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the school.
- The spiritual and moral development of pupils is enhanced by whole school events such as an annual Religious Education week and yearly retreats which are arranged for all pupils in Key Stage 2, which allow them opportunities for quiet reflection and for deepening their relationship with God; these are led by the Parish Priest and other members of religious orders.
- Pupil led chaplaincy is a current focus for St Mary's and the school is developing a Key Stage 2 Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) group. These pupils have begun to plan and lead liturgy within the school.



- St Mary's has close links with other schools in the Lambeth Catholic Schools Partnership, sharing, for example, sporting and music events for pupils and spiritual development for staff who attend retreats, Religious Education conferences and Masses.

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

- The effective Headteacher pulls the whole community together as a close cohesive team. She has inspired and mentored a number of leaders who have progressed to headships.
- The Headteacher and Senior leaders, together with the Governing Body, have a passion, clear vision and love of Catholic education and are totally committed, through strong self-evaluation to promoting, monitoring and reviewing a range of inspiring opportunities for everybody's spiritual and moral development, including plans to extend the provision of retreats to Key Stage 1 pupils.
- Governors have a very high profile and presence in the school through Learning Walks, attending liturgies, circulating amongst staff and parents in school and the parish and through strong links with the Parent Staff Association.
- The Governing Body has an excellent knowledge and understanding of St Mary's. Through regular contact, updates of the Catholicity of the school and strategic training in-house and from the Local Authority, they have a clear idea of their next steps. They provide a good balance of strategic challenge and support.
- Training for staff on retreat, in staff meetings and Diocesan conferences is well-thought out and enhances their understanding and commitment to the Church's educational mission. Non-Catholic and new teachers feel very welcome and fully supported.
- The school liaises with St Mary's University College to train and support future Catholic teachers.
- St Mary's successfully engages parents in school life by keeping them well-informed about events that are happening in school and the community in newsletters and on the website. Their views are greatly valued and they were, with other stakeholders, involved in a working party to create a new Relationship and Sex Education Policy. They said that their views were listened to, for example, leaders actioned a request for more frequent reports about their children.
- Leaders of the school were asked by inspectors to consider ways in which they might help parents to further support their children's faith journey with information about, the Liturgical seasons, feast days or themes with Catholic values; this could be through a Religious Education newsletter or inclusions into the existing weekly newsletter or website.



- St Mary's is part of the Lambeth Catholic Schools Partnership, one aim of which is to develop excellent leaders by promoting distributive leadership within its Catholic schools. St Mary's Headteacher is the 'Link Headteacher' who liaises between the Education Commission and the Partnership.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

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

- The pupils, some who arrive with lower than expected communication and language skills and from areas of social deprivation, make very good progress in Religious Education.
- The number of pupils reaching the expected standard in Religious Education by the end of Year 6 is above those achieved in English and Maths which in turn are just above the expected standards achieved nationally. The number achieving the higher level of achievement in Religious Education is in line with those achieving nationally for English and Maths. Pupils who have Additional Educational Needs (AEN) have targeted and effective support and make progress in line with their peers.
- Pupils show great pride and respect for their written work which is evident from their beautiful Religious Education books which show coverage, breadth and a variety of recorded activities.
- In class, pupils made it clear that they enjoyed their Religious Education. One pupil said, "I like writing about God 'cos he's the best!" and another "It makes Jesus real for me". During lessons observed, they listened attentively and made good use of religious vocabulary. Their knowledge and understanding of scripture is excellent. They talked to each other and readily shared their ideas and their faith, working with a partner or in a group. There are many opportunities throughout the day for pupils to consider their spiritual nature and relationships with others.
- Pupils work with enthusiasm, eagerness and great interest. They tackle and relish challenging tasks and discussions and take full advantage of their opportunities. Consequently, behaviour is excellent because the pupils apply themselves in lessons, strive to produce their best work and work well independently and with others.
- Parents said they have confidence in the provision made by the school and are happy about the way Religious Education is taught.

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

- Effective assessments for and of learning are made with staff considering ongoing verbal and written observations as well as work produced during lessons. Pupils are formally assessed three times a year. Assessments are moderated across phases and





between schools in the Deanery to ensure accuracy and are clearly linked to planning to ensure that building on prior learning enables pupils to fulfil their potential.

- St Mary's is currently developing assessment without levels in line with other subjects using Diocesan guidance.
- Staff work together to share their talents, enthusiasm and resources, with an open willingness to learn from each other. This co-operation could now be extended to include observations of their colleagues. Meaningful guidance from the Religious Education leader is highly valued.
- Staff regularly give feedback to inform, encourage and praise pupils both verbally and in written developmental comments and expect pupils to react appropriately. Pupils enjoy receiving 'Team Point' awards in whole school assembly for performance and effort along with the celebration of awards or certificates earned beyond school.
- Teaching is effective and purposeful and many outstanding features were observed during the inspection such as:
  - a pace of delivery which maintained pupils interest and enthusiasm;
  - excellent teacher subject knowledge and a deep passion for Religious Education;
  - the use of scripture to deepen pupils' reflections on the Word of God;
  - emphasis on the importance and meaning of the Mass;
  - the use of high-level questioning to assess and extend pupils' understanding;
  - the way prior learning was reinforced throughout the lessons;
  - the use of artwork and images to illuminate ideas, themes and prayers;
  - the relationships within the class which are built on care and mutual respect;
  - high expectations, challenging tasks and thought-provoking discussions;
  - the space given to pupils to make their own learning choices.
- Teachers' inspiration, enthusiasm and creativity produce well-balanced, interesting and differentiated lessons. Very evident was the importance of making topics relevant to pupils who were called upon to relate what they learnt in lessons to their own lives and experiences. Pupils were also directed to use their initiative and extend their learning with research, sometimes on iPads and laptops.
- Teaching Assistants were well-briefed and worked instinctively and patiently to help pupils of all abilities to optimise their learning.
- A generous budget is intelligently used to provide high quality, needed resources, like prayer books, music copyrights and artwork.

**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, such as the use of computer programmes. The school puts particular emphasis on the importance of singing, playing instruments and art to stimulate interest and performance. Links are made with other subjects and life beyond school. Teachers plan together to support and inspire one another.
- The Headteacher and senior leaders have a strong commitment to self-reflection which ensures that systematic and productive monitoring activities such as Pupil Progress Meetings identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. This mission for self-improvement with, for example, planning to improve pupils' learning choices, leads to staff undertaking well-targeted and strategic action to improve teaching and learning and the achievement and enjoyment of pupils.
- The Governing Body takes a passionate interest in St Mary's and ensures that the provision for Religious Education enables all pupils to reach their spiritual and academic potential. They receive training, from the Diocese and the Religious Education leader, on changes to the Religious Education curriculum and assessment procedures. They are extremely supportive but also confident and questioning in their approach.
- The Religious Education link governor works closely and effectively with the Religious Education leader to monitor pupil performance and the curriculum, for example, she participates in liturgy, looks at the engagement of pupils in lessons, notes their pride in their Religious Education work and talks to staff.
- The Religious Education leader has excellent knowledge, a capacity for strong leadership, is passionate and has committed spiritual purpose. She is held in high esteem and has developed positive relationships with staff who respect and appreciate her advice. She supports newly qualified teachers and non-Catholic staff. She delivers training at meetings and Inset, for example, on achieving greater depth. She attends Diocesan training, meetings and conferences and liaises with other Catholic schools to share best practice and to moderate assessments.
- The school enriches the curriculum with a programme of creative activities which engages and motivates pupils' learning and facilitates a high level of enjoyment, for example, working with Omnibus Theatre company to write a play for them to perform, trips to the Dulwich Picture Gallery, interschool sporting events and a variety of clubs. Pupils' understanding of other faiths would be enhanced by meeting others with different beliefs from the communities that surround the school and from visiting their places of worship.
- Written reports, parent evenings and informal meetings keep parents up-to-date with the learning and development of their children in Religious Education. They said that their children tell them what happens in their Religious Education lessons. Parents are



given termly written information about the Religious Education topics to be covered and some information is available on class pages on the website.

## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

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

- Collective Worship is a truly spiritual experience in St Mary's. The pupils are reverential in prayerful situations and view communal, personal prayer and worship as an integral aspect of their time in school, irrespective of their ability or cultural background.
- The Catholic liturgical year, seasons and feasts are confidently understood and celebrated. The pupils learn about parts of the Mass and liturgical colours and contributed Remembrance Cards to a service to commemorate Holy Souls in November.
- The GIFT team have responsibility for preparing and leading parts of the Mass in Church and school and pupils readily prepare and lead the singing which is a strength of the school. On alternate weeks, liturgies for each class are led by the pupils, sharing Bible readings, their work, singing hymns, offering prayers and sharing their own experiences. Pupils also contribute to key stage and whole school liturgies, for example, at Pentecost, each class prepares a reading for a liturgy which they present to the school through drama, music and scripture readings.
- During the inspection, Key Stage 2's 'Quiet Liturgy' was led by the Religious Education Leader and followed Lectio Divina. The pupils listened attentively to repetitions of the story of Jesus Calming the Storm. They meditated, prayed and contemplated on the message God wanted them to hear and to take away with them. Pupils were mature as they chose where to sit amongst lighted lanterns and respectful throughout the liturgy. The pupils' singing was uplifting and a joy to hear and be a part of.
- The creative arts are key elements of liturgical celebrations; the importance of music was witnessed in school Hymn Practices. Music is led in such an enthusiastic and inspirational way as to motivate pupils to produce exceptional performances which give their celebrations an added spiritual dimension.
- 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. Pupils choose to attend at times where they can pray



voluntarily such as the October Rosary mornings. Each class has a beautiful book of heartfelt pupils' prayers. Prayer is weaved throughout the school day.

- Each classroom has an attractive and meaningful prayer area which is used as a spiritual focal point. Candles are used to great effect in school liturgies.

### **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, from individual reflection and meditation to whole school and Parish celebrations.
- Collective Worship is planned, led and evaluated by knowledgeable, skilled and passionate staff with a clear message and purpose. They actively teach, encourage and support their pupils to take an active role in planning and delivering quality worship in class or whole school settings.
- The pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 attend Mass in St Mary's Parish Church to celebrate special feasts and seasons. Each class in Key Stage 2 attends Mass at least three times a year. Mass is celebrated in school when pupils have made their First Holy Communion and for Year 6 pupils leaving St Mary's. Pupils in school are very involved in preparing, leading and singing.
- Daily Collective Worship takes place with the whole school reflecting Sunday's Gospel reading, weekly class-led or 'Quiet' liturgies or class reflections and prayers. This worship makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- St Mary's organises other assemblies including the 'Shoebox Liturgy' for the Link to Hope charity where pupils bring in and celebrate the shoeboxes they have taken a special delight in filling for children in Eastern Europe; they receive pictures and information from those that receive them.
- The Parish Priest is a welcomed member of the community who regularly attends Class Liturgies and Mass, visits classes and leads retreats for pupils and staff. He supported the development of the school's approach to the Year of Mercy. One parent told us, "When children see their classmates at Mass and their Parish Priest at school, this is exciting and adds to the sense of community."
- St Mary's provides attractive areas in school for prayer and reflection to match the seasons, like the Rosary area in the hall in May and October and an area of Remembrance in November.
- Parents are welcomed into the school and enthusiastically attend many liturgies and celebration; they particularly enjoyed the joyous Nativity. Parents are invited to come

in and pray the Rosary in the library every Tuesday in October before the end of school. They are also given a timetable of the School's Liturgy Rota to help them participate fully in the Collective Worship of St Mary's. One parent confirmed this saying, "We are invited to be part of the children's liturgies and assemblies. It is lovely to see the children having time to be at peace and reflect, and also be encouraged to cheer on each other's successes, be they academic or otherwise."

**How well leaders and governors 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. Their keen understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts enables them to promote high quality liturgy and worship for everyone at St Mary's. 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 its delivery and effect and to plan for its improvement. This improvement includes the wider community as they are planning to enhance pupil's spiritual experiences by organising retreats with other pupils from schools in the Lambeth Catholic School's Partnership. The Parish Priest and Religious Education leader review the pupils' evaluations of their retreats and plan accordingly.
- Leaders, by their behaviour, attitude and practice, are very effective and inspiring role models for pupils and staff. They work hard to provide thought provoking, age-appropriate and accessible Collective Worship for all pupils.
- They provide professional development opportunities, advice and assistance for staff and governors on planning and delivering Collective Worship. Leaders have worked with staff on the structure and nature of assemblies to differentiate between worship and non-religious aspects.
- They are committed to encouraging and enabling pupils in the school to lead and facilitate the faith journey of themselves and their peers.