



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 100636

St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Crescent Lane
Clapham, London
SW4 9QJ

Inspection date: 1 March 2013

Chair of Governors:	Mrs Lynette Murphy O'Dwyer
Headteacher:	Ms Karen Pluckrose
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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of 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. It also serves the parishes of St Francis de Sales, Stockwell and St Vincent de Paul, Clapham Junction. 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 358. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly average, though a significant number come with little or no knowledge of English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals is average. Around 16% of the pupils receive extra support in class for their special educational needs. The school covers a large socially and ethnically diverse catchment area that has some high levels of deprivation. The largest ethnic groups are Black African pupils (26%), followed by White Any Other pupils (18%) and White British pupils (16%), Portuguese pupils (10%) - mainland Portugal and Madeira, and then pupils from 'Other Ethnic Group' 9%, which for our school includes many pupils of South and Central American origin - Colombia and Ecuador. Consequently, the proportion of pupils from an ethnic minority group is very high at 84% reflecting the fact that homes where English is an additional language is well above average. A significant number of pupils across the school (52%) are at a lower level of English fluency.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

GRADE
2

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a school where every member of the school community is highly valued for their unique and personal contribution. Every governor and member of staff is completely committed to fulfilling the mission of the school to 'provide the best possible education for all children and to develop each child's full potential.' As a Catholic community 'the teachings of Christ inform all their efforts and the way in which they treat one another' with every child's 'talent and gift nurtured', their 'effort and success rewarded' and 'their needs met'. These elements of the school's Mission Statement are clearly evident in all the school does. The good quality of education provided is clearly underpinned by a conviction that learning is a gift from God and that 'if something is worth doing, it is worth doing well'. Maintaining this high quality provision reflects the continuity provided by the headteacher's ongoing leadership.

The headteacher has established an effective senior management team which includes the Religious Education coordinator. The coordinator ensures that this curriculum area maintains a high profile and is appropriately viewed as a core subject. This reflects a strong collegiality among the whole staff, which enhances the school's ability to progress. The school places equal value on academic achievement and the pupils' personal faith development. This recognition of the individual's faith journey is a significant strength. The strong home, school, parish partnership is impressive, particularly taking account of the diverse mix, geographic spread and the number of parishes the school population is drawn from.

A strong and distinct Catholic ethos permeates every aspect of school life and is clearly evident throughout the school environment and in the warm and positive relationships between governors, staff, pupils and parents.

The very detailed self-evaluation form provided, will serve as a working document to further improve attainment, if developed into a summary document and used in conjunction with the school development plan. The school development plan identifies proposed actions, with clear milestones or success criteria against which their impact can be systematically monitored and evaluated.

The school has successfully worked on the development points from the previous inspection. It now has even stronger assessment processes in place to track individual pupil progress and thereby cater for identified individual needs. The school has very effectively utilised every available learning space. The school has been maintained to a very high standard and provides an inspiring learning environment for pupils.

A very good 42% response was received from the parental questionnaire and these were overwhelmingly positive and supportive of the school. The school is committed to excellence in spiritual, social and academic education with governors, headteacher, staff, parents, priests and pupils, all working together to make a community which fosters a real appreciation of individual worth. The school is very welcoming with pupil behaviour both in and out of the classroom being exemplary. Pupils are delightful in demeanour, polite and exceptionally well-mannered.

In its last Ofsted inspection the school was commended for living up to its strong Christian values and mission statement which includes providing '...an orderly, stimulating environment in which effort and personal success are rewarded, special gifts are catered for and needs met ...' It is to their credit that this continues to be the central tenet of their modus operandi. As one parent wrote, "the school is outstanding in its pastoral care. My children have developed a really strong sense of right and wrong and are very aware of

the needs of others.”

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

St Mary’s has a good capacity, combined with strength of staff and governance, to build on its clear strengths and move the school forward in a culture of lifelong learning.

Governors and management should:

- Continue to review the current provision for Religious Education, make a decision on the syllabus to be adopted and establish a schedule of training, development and support for staff to secure full implementation of the adopted programme over the coming academic year.
- Promote more pupil initiated learning and opportunities for research through greater differentiation of tasks. Extend pupil learning, in particular for more able pupils.

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The Catholic life of the school

GRADE 2

Leadership and management

Leadership and management at St Mary's are collegiate by nature and with very clear direction. The headteacher and senior leadership team, which includes the Religious Education coordinator, is to be commended for very effectively developing the Catholic nature and life of the school. The governors, the headteacher and the senior leadership team, work together in a dedicated and enthusiastic way to ensure that the school's Religious Education and spiritual life remain central to its work. This collegiate approach remains key to the school's success. This mission is clearly defined and communicated to the whole school community and to those who visit.

The school offers a broad curriculum that is marked by an emphasis on cross curricular learning that impacts on the Religious Education curriculum and the development of the whole child. Integration of opportunities to foster spiritual and moral development across the school curriculum is a strength of the school that sees the embedding of core values, effective use of circle time and development of a consistent PHSE scheme.

School governance is strong, thoughtful and reflective. Members of the governing body are active within the school and are keen to support its on-going development. All are justly proud of the school's proactive role in serving its parish communities and there is a strong desire to extend this, wherever possible, to better serve the needs of families attending other parishes.

Governors are alert to the issue of succession planning in the area of staff recruitment to preserve the Catholic character of the school. The priests are very supportive and actively involved in the life of the school and their commitment is greatly valued for both the curriculum support offered and chaplaincy provision made to the whole school community. They work hard to further improve what are already strong home, school, and parish links.

The Deanery Catholic Schools' Partnership between both primary and secondary schools is exceptionally strong. The leadership and management of St Mary's is marked by ambition, a determination to succeed and recognition of the intrinsic value of the individual. The school's Mission Statement is a living document that receives high profile around the school, is at the centre of all documentation and is lived out by staff and pupils both during the school day and beyond. The school has a high quality school improvement plan that includes a clearly laid out action plan for the ongoing development of Religious Education.

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

GRADE 1

St Mary's School is a prayerful community that respects the faith journey of each person whilst nurturing the faith of each individual. Broad provision, that is clearly central to the life of the school, is made for staff and pupils to engage in formal and informal prayer and acts of collective worship. From the earliest age pupils' response to prayer is laudable as they act with reverence and keenness to participate. Prayer is interwoven into the school day, commencing with class prayers in the morning, collective worship on scheduled days, lunchtime prayer and afternoon prayer, as well as prayer during Religious Education lessons and spontaneous prayer when a suitable moment arises. The frequency and emphasis placed on prayer engenders a sense of the importance of taking time to worship and reflect. Children frequently compose their own prayers.

One of the many highlights of the inspection period was to witness the very high standard of the school's choir. This marked the school's drive for excellence in all it does and created an atmosphere of real 'awe and wonder'. The liturgical life of the school is a

central factor in its distinctive nature and is outstanding in what it contributes to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Parents commented on how moving many of these celebrations are. Pupils are given many opportunities to engage in personal prayer and reflection and to share in group and whole school worship through participation at liturgy and Mass. Pupils have a very positive approach to prayer and liturgies. They are keen to lead worship for others. They are clear about their roles as a minister or as part of the assembly in a liturgical context and are able to articulate this. All pupils participate readily in liturgies and other forms of collective worship and show a real ability to reflect and develop an understanding of what they see, hear and do. Pupils take an active part in the worship life of the school through listening and responding to the Word of God through prayer, reflection, song and action.

It was noteworthy that recently Local Authority reviewers commented that they had '*observed exemplary behaviour and attitudes in liturgy.*'

Classroom focal points and displays around the school are excellent. Focal points are tasteful, lively and interactive and include examples of pupils' work. Display work is of a very high order and marks the Catholicity of the school. Current Lenten displays include many inspirational prayers written by pupils. To mark the 150th anniversary of St Mary's School, each class was responsible for designing part of a large mosaic representing aspects of daily life in the school, with everybody in the school family having the opportunity to contribute to its production. This now rightly takes pride of place in the school, serving as a good example of the life and purpose of the community.

The two liturgies attended were outstanding celebrations. They were very well prepared and resourced with good use being made of candles, the interactive whiteboard, singing, signing and reflection. The quality of liturgy impressively engaged pupils and staff, who participated fully. One reflection was based on "Psalm 91: "Be with me Lord, when I am in trouble" and in a lesson observed pupils compiled a recipe for communion within a family or class, providing good opportunities for Spiritual and Moral Development.

Parents commented on the good communication that exists between school and families' regarding their children's learning in Religious Education and other subjects. A substantial number of parents regularly participate in liturgy, Mass and other religious celebrations that mark the academic and the liturgical year. All parents who responded to a questionnaire from the inspectors reported that the school welcomes them to liturgy, Mass and other celebrations. Ninety-nine per cent of parents who responded to the inspector's questionnaire reported that the school helps their child to grow in an understanding of the Catholic faith and ninety-seven per cent of parents respondents reported that the school seeks their views and takes account of their suggestions and concerns. At a meeting with inspectors parents made very favourable comments about how impressed they are by the children's confident and well-mannered behaviour, their excellent attitude to learning and their prayerfulness when visiting the parish church. As a parent remarked on her questionnaire return, "I have a lot of respect for the school and the wonderful environment they provide, for my child to grow as a good person in their faith and socially".

Community cohesion

The governors, headteacher and the senior leadership team work very effectively to ensure that all pupils understand the continuous and open invitation to contribute to class and school life. Pupils readily take the opportunity to make an effective contribution to their class or school with many making a substantial contribution within and beyond the school community. Many school activities and initiatives emerge from, and are successfully sustained by, the ideas and energy of pupils with the support of a strong and active

GRADE 1

Parents' Association which serves the school well.

St Mary's is an inclusive school and a harmonious community where Gospel values are lived out in the daily life of the school. Diversity is valued and pupils have a good understanding of community in a local, national and international sense.

A warm, friendly and welcoming atmosphere pervades the school and all it does. Pupils with English as an additional language are well supported as are pupils with special educational needs. Pupils' family units are valued and respected.

Leaders at all levels ensure that all pupils understand that change brings new opportunities as well as challenges and they tackle these with confidence and resilience. These actions and attitudes generously allow pupils to grow in their faith and to become informed and responsible members of their communities. The school works together with a number of local, national and international agencies and share achievements and successes with parents and the wider community.

The Religious Education curriculum nurtures attitudes of respect for all faiths as well as mutual understanding of other Christian denominations. Pupils' diverse cultural and socio economic backgrounds and those evident locally and nationally are recognised, valued and celebrated. The school has introduced a 'Global Church Week' to coincide with CAFOD's Harvest Fast Day to more fully study and examine global issues such as poverty, education and health and to learn about how to make the world a fairer place. Pupils develop an appreciation of the gifts and privileges they experience in a first world country and are empathic towards people who are living in more challenging and deprived areas. Families are invited to participate in a regular cycle of fundraising events, to contribute boxes of presents to the Romania Shoebox Appeal and to participate at home in Family Fast Days.

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Religious Education

GRADE 2

Achievement and standards in Religious Education

Pupils at St. Mary's achieve good standards that are generally in line with and sometimes exceed aged related expectations. The levels of attainment at each key stage assessed are good in relation to expected levels based on attainment on entry to the school. The pupils are highly motivated, engaged and enthusiastic in their learning and their behaviour is exemplary. Progress is sustained across all key stages with all staff following a jointly agreed marking policy for Religious Education which encourages the use of developmental marking. Formal assessments are carried out at the end of one topic per term and a teacher assessment level is given at the end of each year. Further informal assessments are carried out throughout all topics. Records are kept of pupils levels and learning objective achievements.

Assessment levels are entered onto the school's whole curriculum electronic assessment and tracking program using a sub-division of each level into a, b and c in order to provide a clearer picture of pupil progress. Termly assessments reported to the Religious Education coordinator have resulted in more informed teaching. Progress in Religious Education is specifically reported on in pupils' annual reports.

The level of consistency that has been achieved across the school has secured a strong foundation on which to build future progress.

The school might like to consider introducing targets for pupils in Religious Education to enable them to have greater ownership of their next steps in learning within Religious Education thereby mirroring other subjects although this is not required. Achievement in Religious Education is enhanced by some excellent developmental marking. A pupil was asked, "How will this help you when thinking about our brothers and sisters across the world?" The pupil responded saying, "It will help me by loving my brothers and sisters more". This excellent practice could be usefully shared to secure even greater consistency across the school.

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

GRADE 2

Religious Education has a very high priority at St Mary's School. The Mission Statement reflects St Mary's as an ever reflecting and developing school, where the needs and talents of each individual are cherished.

Religious Education is recognised as a core subject and the timetable for each class includes regular provision for Religious Education teaching in accordance with Diocesan guidelines. Each class teacher is responsible for the teaching of their own pupils with some lessons being taught by other members of staff. Support staff make a significant contribution to the learning of supported pupils in Religious Education. The majority of teaching seen was good. The teaching team has strength and subject expertise. The school places a high value on Religious Education in-service training which has contributed to the good standards of Religious Education teaching and materials in the school. Teachers use the Diocesan recommended 'Here I Am' Religious Education scheme. It is supplemented by the use of a range of resources. Teachers' use of ICT and class discussion is well developed. Pupils have a good knowledge of the chronology of the Mass and can articulate their understanding of this. In lessons pupils are fully engaged, which greatly contributes to their learning and provides a real opportunity to extend their progress. Through greater levels of differentiation, more pupil initiated learning and opportunities to undertake independent research tasks progress could be extended even further. Teachers have very good classroom management skills and pupils respond well by demonstrating a keenness to give of their best. The development of Religious Education

vocabulary in the context of wider cross curricular links with literacy is particularly strong.

The behaviour of pupils in lessons is such as to create a purposeful learning environment. They demonstrate considerable maturity in relationships with adults and their peers. They are friendly, articulate and proud of their school. Pupils' workbooks reflect good curriculum coverage and demonstrate the great pride they place in this subject area and are marked by very high standards of presentation.

In a Key Stage 1 class pupils were given the opportunity to undertake differentiated tasks, which actively engaged pupils, creating a real 'buzz' of learning around the classroom. A lower Key Stage two class saw the development of strong cooperative working through the creation of songs which they wrote and performed. Teachers generally employ good questioning skills. Care needs to be taken to ensure responses are revisited as appropriate. In some classes background music was used to successfully create a very calm and reflective environment. In the best paced lessons pupils were provided with visual countdowns via the interactive whiteboard to mark the completion time for a task. These examples of good practice and less didactic teaching could usefully be shared in line with custom and practice already established in the school, to achieve greater pace in lessons and a consistency of approach that will in turn raise levels of progress and attainment.

The Religious Education curriculum

GRADE 2

In line with national guidance the Religious Education curriculum more than meets the 10% timetabled requirement and is well supported through cross curricular links with a staff experienced in the teaching of Religious Education. The support and input given by the parish priest both in a Chaplaincy role and in curriculum support is greatly appreciated and valued by all. The subject is well resourced with good budgetary provision that provides for a good range of up to date materials. The curriculum meets the requirements of the statutory curriculum effectively. The provision is focused on meeting the needs and interests of all pupils, taking into consideration their prior attainment and experiences. The Religious Education curriculum is developed and delivered so that it is relevant for pupils. It takes into consideration the many differing abilities and interests of pupils.

Parents are kept well informed in regard to the Religious Education through termly class summaries which are sent to each family and are available on the school website. Twice yearly formal parents' evenings are held to discuss children's learning and development including the Religious Education syllabus. An annual written report, with Religious Education as the first subject, is prepared for every child. Informal meetings with parents are held when necessary, to discuss issues or concerns around Religious Education or other aspects of a child's social or moral development. A rota showing the bi-weekly class led liturgy dates is distributed at the start of each term and is always displayed on the main school notice board and is on the school website. All parents, governors, friends and family members are invited to join in all liturgies to mark important days, such as Harvest Fast Day and Remembrance Day as well as the annual whole school Lenten Reflection and Easter Celebration.

The Wednesday Word leaflet has been given to each family since January 2013. Pupils were enthused by this and talked about sharing these at home.

Children are encouraged to engage their family in reading and reflecting on the coming Sunday's Gospel reading. Plans are underway to invite parents to a series of meetings to share ways of celebrating the Word at home.

At times when there has been an extra ordinary event such as a bereavement parents are invited to a special liturgy to offer them the opportunity to express and discuss their concerns. Pupils also have the ability and are given opportunities to discuss their own beliefs and traditions of the church.

Leadership and management of Religious Education

GRADE 2

The school has a deep awareness of the long and proud tradition of Catholic education that has been historically provided on the school site since 1861. The governors, the headteacher and senior leaders inspire all staff with a sense of commitment to continuing this proud tradition. The school's mission calls for the achievement of the highest academic standards and a commitment to a culture of continuous self-improvement. Leadership and management in Religious Education is strong and effective, being well structured and established over a long period of time. The headteacher, deputy and senior leadership team, which includes the Religious Education coordinator, promote a stable, very caring and supportive Catholic ethos with their impact being apparent. Leaders at all levels work tirelessly to support each individual pupil and raise achievement.

The Religious Education coordinator works very effectively with the headteacher and the senior leadership team to lead and develop Religious Education throughout the school, ensuring the well-being of learners and to ensure that there is a high and continual focus on the educational and spiritual experience of all pupils. Her coordinator file and all Religious Education documentation are of a high standard and she is highly effective in managing and maintaining the exceptionally strong liturgical life of the school. Her role could now be usefully developed to involve her in a more regular cycle of monitoring of her subject to include an increased level of lesson observations, book scrutinies and moderation of work across the school.

The governing body is a very effective, experienced and a long established group. Through regular meetings of the full body and sub-committees, they discharge their responsibilities well and take a passionate interest in the life of the school increasingly holding it to account for the standards achieved as it develops its role further.

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