



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 100172

**St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Glenure Road
Eltham
SE9 1UF**

Inspection date: May 17 2017

Chair of Governors: Mr P Drake
Headteacher: Miss M Jackson
Inspectors: Mr D Fox
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EDUCATION COMMISSION

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SECTION 48

Introduction

Description of the school

St Mary's Catholic Primary school is situated in the Greenwich Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is in the Greenwich Local Authority. The principal parish it serves is Christ Church, Eltham, but pupils also come from St John Fisher and St Thomas More, Eltham and a smaller number from St Mary's, Chislehurst, St Joseph's, Bromley and Our Lady of the Rosary, Blackfen. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 99%. Overall, the weekly allocation of curriculum time to Religious Education is 10%.

The school takes pupils from ages 4 – 11. Currently, there are 469 pupils on roll.

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The attainment of pupils entering the school is below average. 12% of pupils are on the SEND register. 17% of pupils have English as an additional language. The school receives Pupil Premium funding for 8% of the pupils. The majority of pupils are white and black British with 12% pupils from Eastern European countries.

Key for inspection grades

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

St. Mary's is an outstanding school. It is a school with a distinctive Catholic ethos. Pupils know they belong to an overtly Catholic Christian community and appreciate the care they receive. The teachings and values of the Gospel are fundamental to the life and work of the school. It is an inspirational community where each individual feels truly loved, welcomed and empowered, allowing them to be inspired by the teachings of Christ. It is a happy Christ-centred learning environment. Children and staff are happy to work at St Mary's and are very proud of their achievements and of their school. They show care and consideration for others and empathy for those less fortunate than themselves. They respect and understand other beliefs and religious traditions. Pupils know their strengths and areas for development and are able to reflect on the things that lead them to act in particular ways.

There is an effective partnership between all levels of leadership. Consequently, there is a clear vision for the school and a commitment to ensuring pupils thrive academically socially and spiritually. They strive to ensure that all children achieve high standards in Religious Education, balanced with creating a prayerful and spiritual school.

Prayer and worship are an integral part of school life and there are many opportunities for pupils to pray together and privately.

The school works closely with parents and the parish community to support the development of their children's faith. The "meet and greet" evening for new parents has been effective in increasing attendance at assemblies and masses. Parents are made to feel part of the Catholic family at St Mary's. The parish sisters are actively involved in school life. They support the Faith Friends and the faith magazine. They take photographs of liturgies and special events, judge Religious Education competitions and help plan events such as the Food and Fellowship evening.

Pupils at St Mary's are excellent ambassadors for Catholic education. One parent commented, "Faith is inherent in them when they leave".

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- Consider ways to ensure the school Self Evaluation is more concise and highlights the school's strengths and how these impact on pupil achievement and actions.
- Build on the now established pupil led prayer initiative to consolidate the good practice of this initiative throughout the school so all pupils can benefit.

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

The mission statement, "With God's help, we work, we labour", is central to the daily life of the school and is displayed in prominent places. The pupils are proud of their own version, "At St Mary's we dream, believe, achieve, succeed", which is displayed in a large stained glass window. It is evident in the excellent relationships in the school. Pupils show a high level of respect for each other and are encouraged at all times to live the Gospel through 'loving their neighbour'. They can articulate their understanding that their behaviour always has consequences and that they are an example to others in the community. One pupil said, "Teachers have faith in us. We want to make children happy."

They contribute in many ways, such as the Year 6 ambassadors and the School Council. They have started a Giving Tree for pupils to donate gifts for people in the community. The Faith Friends take responsibility for preparing liturgy, organising fund-raising activities, and helping infant pupils by storytelling and songs. For example, inspectors observed Year 6 pupils explaining the Rosary to younger pupils and teaching them the Hail Mary. Their maturity is very impressive. They have their own magazine to show how pupils can contribute to the spiritual and prayer life of the school.

Pupils display an awareness of the needs of others in the school and wider community. There are many charities which benefit from their generous spirit, such as Demelza House, the children's hospice, LEPR and the food bank.

Prayers are an intrinsic part of the life of the school. There are traditional prayers which the pupils learn, but there are also many opportunities to write their own prayers for the Prayer Board and the Tree of Faith. They write their thank you notes for 'Thank You Thursday' which helps pupils show their appreciation for the blessing and talents they have received. Prayer books are sent home by several classes to enable families to pray together and build up a collection of prayers for the school. This year there is a retreat day planned with the CAFOD speaker for the Year 5 and 6 classes when pupils will reflect on life as a child refugee.

Pupils are given many great opportunities through their lessons, resources, visitors and trips to experience the wonder and awe of God's great world and realise their own gifts and abilities. They contribute as much to the school as they benefit from it.

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

Standards of attainment and progress in Religious Education are generally high as a result of teaching which inspires and challenges pupils. Early Years are given an excellent foundation for learning in Religious Education. Pupils are supported and challenged in equal measure. They respond positively and display a real sense of enjoyment in lessons. This is evident through lesson observations, pupils' evaluations, the work they complete and discussions with pupils.

The children are extremely well behaved and highly motivated. They know that their actions and behaviour in lessons can affect others. They are kind and considerate to each other and value each other's contributions and efforts. Children enjoy and are positive in

their attitudes to Religious Education. Lessons are often lively, or have a peaceful ambience, with thoughtful questioning and discussion. The pupils are encouraged to respond and offer their own ideas, values and beliefs and to value each others' opinions and ideas. Consequently, pupils are highly motivated and enjoy their work. They strive to do their best.

How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship

Pupils participate very well in the prayer life of the school and parish. They are given an active role to play by helping to set up the hall for whole school and key stage Masses, by writing their own prayers, creating gifts for the Offertory, playing musical instruments and by participating in liturgical dance. Children are very involved in Collective Worship and make the most of the opportunities throughout the year to share their religious art, dance, songs and prayers. In their questionnaires, many children said that they loved the class Masses and would like more of these during the year. The Crowning of Mary celebration seen during the inspection was organised and led by Year 4 pupils. It was a deeply spiritual experience for the whole school, including nursery pupils.

Pupils demonstrate excellent behaviour and a high level of interest and involvement in assemblies. The Parish Priest said he was pleased with the reverence with which pupils prayed and participated in acts of worship. He commented on the value, placed by school leaders on linking prayer and learning.

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How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leaders, governors and managers have a clear vision for the Catholic life of the school. They are committed to establishing a Christian ethos based on Gospel values. They are inspired by their mission of service to pupils and staff. One governor said, "If we produce happy children then I am happy." As a result, relationships are excellent.

Developing pupil-led liturgies is one of the school's priorities to ensure that pupils' understanding of the faith is enriched by participating and through contributing their own responses.

Governors regularly come into the school to visit and carry out informal observations as well as attend Masses, and other school events. The Chair of Governors is a regular visitor and effectively challenges and supports school leaders. The parish priest, who is the link Religious Education governor, ensures that there is a high level of challenge and scrutiny.

The Headteacher is an excellent role model for the community. Her dedication to the pupils is recognised by them and their parents. She has established a strong partnership with the Religious Education Leader and link governor. Consequently, there are many opportunities for pupils to pray and worship. The Faith Friends, introduced and developed by the current Religious Education leader is an established group of pupils who have a major impact on the Catholic life of the school.

The Religious Education leader has frequent communication with the parish priest which ensures he is involved with the ongoing life of the school. They maintain a friendly and happy relationship with him. He supports the teaching and learning through helping teachers develop their religious literacy and working with the Religious Education leader to plan for the life of the school.

Inspectors agreed with governors that there is a wonderful culture and ethos. Overall, although the Self Evaluation Form is accurate, it does not do justice to the quality of the school's leadership and management and needs to be a more impact driven document.

How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils

Leaders, governors and managers have a clear understanding of their role in raising standards of teaching and learning in Religious Education. They have established a culture of sharing good practice and high expectations through performance management and professional development. The school improvement plan is detailed and shows that they know how to continue this progress.

The Headteacher is an excellent leader. She has a clear vision for the school and a strong commitment to helping pupils learn. The Religious Education leader's expertise in identifying areas for staff development and her ability to deliver this training, combined enthusiasm ensure high quality and effective outcomes in standards of teaching and

learning. She is an integral part of the Senior Leadership Team. They contribute to the school's ongoing strategic development across the school. Assessment is rigorous and effective. Consequently, there is detailed evidence on the progress pupils make. It informs staff who are knowledgeable in adapting support and challenge as appropriate. There is a detailed programme of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. The Religious Education Leader uses links with Deanery schools to moderate pupils' work. This ensures that assessment is accurate. There have been training sessions to support teachers in the various levels of attainment and the different resources that can help with this. Those new to the school particularly non-Catholic staff are supported to ensure they feel happy and confident to deliver a Catholic education and ethos.

Succession planning is a strength of the school. Professional development is a key priority in all levels. As a result, they have identified staff who will assume leadership roles within the school in time.

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The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

The quality of teaching and learning observed was outstanding and typical of the school's assessment over time.

All pupils are included and valued and teachers carefully plan their lessons to inspire children with different intelligences, skills and learning styles through a variety of differentiated tasks and challenging activities. In one lesson, for example, pupils chose for themselves how to respond to a high level task. Activities included singing, poetry, the use of Information Technology and model making. Other adults are used effectively to support pupils. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They use differentiation and build on prior learning very effectively.

Great emphasis is placed on learning about Jesus' life and teaching and how we can follow these today. An understanding of scripture is developed by relating the teachings of Jesus to everyday life experiences. Lessons are well planned and teachers ensure that the quality of children's work is high and that each pupil makes progress. Regular opportunities are provided to enable pupils to develop religious literacy and to reflect on their learning. Teachers use a range of high quality resources including technology to inspire and support all pupils. Pupils are encouraged to work individually as well as with others. Teachers are highly skilled in questioning which, challenges at all levels and maximises learning and understanding. This is confirmed by pupils. Pupils' work is developmentally marked and they are given time to respond. The school is currently looking at ways to build on this in order to maximise learning. Achievement and effort are celebrated regularly.

Classrooms are bright and attractive which creates a good environment for learning. Religious Education displays, with keywords and teaching points are changed according to the topic covered or in line with the liturgical year. Pupils' work is displayed. Focal areas are changed regularly and used daily for prayer and reflection. Inspectors are confident that the school has an excellent capacity to develop pupils' learning even further.

The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning

The curriculum allocation for Religious Education throughout the school is 10%. The school follows the "The Way, the Truth and the Life" programme. Teachers follow the planning outlined in the scheme and adapt it as necessary, to support the teaching of other faiths and through the adding of prayer and creativity to the scheme. This is supported with activities to provide rich and varied opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the faith. The provision for the study of other faiths is excellent. Pupils are given many opportunities to learn about other faiths. The programme is well supported by visits to places of worship, such as the Sikh Temple. Speakers are invited regularly to assemblies to explain their faith to pupils.

All children participate in Relationship and Sex Education and follow the 'Journey in Love' programme. The school helps the children to understand that they are a gift from God and that their body is a gift to them from God. Lessons are enhanced by outside speakers including the School Nurse and Life Bus.

In a wider sense, the curriculum is evident in the very visible Catholic identity throughout the school in displays and religious artefacts. Relationships and behaviour are excellent.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

Collective Worship is central to the life of the school. The Religious Education leader and Headteacher work effectively with the Parish Priest and the Sisters of Mercy to create worship experiences which are meaningful to all pupils. As a result, the school's Catholic identity and Mission is reflected in the high-quality provision of prayerful and uplifting acts of worship and spiritual experiences.

The Crowning of Our Lady, as seen during the inspection, is an important annual event for the whole community of St Mary's and it is extremely well attended and supported. Inspectors were very impressed with the quality of prayer and singing. A St Mary's prayer book with child-friendly and traditional prayers is included in the school's 'Welcome Pack' for new pupils. The Rosary is said during the months of October and May. During Lent and Advent and there are prayer sessions at lunchtimes lead by teachers on a rota basis. School Masses are organised throughout the year to complement the special liturgical feasts. The Sisters of Mercy are very supportive of Class Masses through helping pupils and teachers to plan.

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