

St Mary's Catholic Catholic Primary School

URN: 102329

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Brentwood

09–10 July 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

2

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school has responded fully to the areas for improvement from the last inspection.

What the school does well

- Pupils are very proud to be part of the St Mary's community; they feel happy, know they are loved and cared for and value all that is provided by the school.
- The relationship with both the parish and parents is very strong; parents greatly appreciate the pastoral support provided by the school.
- Pupils are able to recall prior knowledge of religious education and make links well with their new learning.
- Pupils enjoy religious education lessons and can relate their learning to their everyday actions in helping and caring for others in the school community and beyond.
- Parents and pupils enjoy the many opportunities provided by the school to celebrate Mass as a community, especially the house and class saints Masses.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the Catholic curriculum by ensuring subject leaders work together to plan opportunities to make connections between discrete subjects that support the school's mission.
- Establish a consistent approach to feedback to pupils to ensure that all pupils understand what they need to do to make progress in their learning.
- Ensure that all staff are skilled in supporting pupils to plan, lead and evaluate well-constructed prayer and liturgy.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

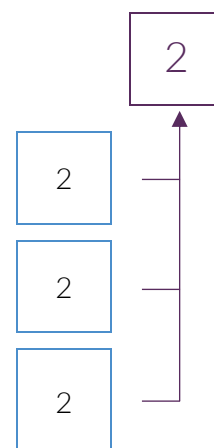
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



Pupils can articulate the school mission statement that 'with Jesus and through the prayers of Mary, we enjoy learning and celebrate our lives together.' They understand that at St Mary's they are 'respectful and learn to love our enemies', as one pupil explained. Pupils appreciate that they are valued and cared for and love the fact they are 'surrounded by our friends and the teachers are always kind and supportive'. Parents also recognise that pupils 'are surrounded by love, faith, and a true sense of belonging.' Pupils are able to talk about their responsibility to care for our common home and have responded to the Laudato Si' challenges for each year group with litter picking, caring for insects and creating a new flower bed. They know that this was a letter written by Pope Francis. Pupils, including the after-school fund raising club and Mini Vinnies, are developing an increasing awareness of the principles of Catholic social teaching. They know that these principles come from the teaching of Jesus. Pupils are involved in selecting charities for which to raise funds, and they chose the cause of the victims of the Californian wild fires. Pupils are very keen to be class and school chaplains. They take their role as chaplains very seriously and make the most of all the opportunities provided.

The review of the mission statement within the last year involved the whole school community. The new visual representation makes it clear that Christ is at the Centre of this school, where home, parish and school are focused together. This is clearly recognised by parents; one said that 'there is an obvious and open expectation from leadership that Christ is at the centre of all we do.' Staff show a strong commitment to the Catholic life of the school through their willingness to embrace new initiatives, and they give generously of their time. Parents also recognise this commitment in their dedication and vocation to be inspiring role models. The strong sense of community has been developed with parents coming together with staff and

children for a range of events including a cultural day, the parish fete and other activities organised by the Parent Teacher Association. The school welcomes everyone from a range of backgrounds and beliefs, with all included in lessons and parents are appreciative of the welcome and support they receive. The care given by staff, particularly those who are working with pupils with additional needs, is particularly noteworthy. Pastoral care is very strong in the school with countless examples of additional support and guidance being given to pupils and families. The school also provides a range of interventions to support pupil wellbeing with two Emotional Literacy Support Assistants and access to a counselling service. The relationship, sex and health education policy is available on the school website and meets diocesan requirements.

Leaders and governors can clearly articulate the school mission which is represented in their Catholic life and mission policy; however, this does now need to be developed as an intrinsic part of all school policies. The school's engagement with the diocese is good. The links across the deanery are strong with staff participating in annual professional development. The links with the parish are exceptional and are valued by the school community. The proximity of the church provides great opportunities for pupils and parents to attend a decade of the Rosary in May and October after school, and the '24 hours with Our Lord' adoration. The partnership with parents is very strong. Parents comment on the approachability of the leadership team and they greatly value the headteacher, who is well regarded as a model of authentic Catholic leadership. Staff feel valued by leaders at St Mary's. Their wellbeing is given a high priority with an acknowledgement that their own families are also important. Leaders have begun to make a distinctive Catholic curriculum by making links across subjects; however, this now needs to be developed more fully across all subject areas. Governors are ambitious for the Catholic life of the school, which is reflected in their minutes. They have an awareness of school events and this now needs to be developed more systematically and include pupils' views to ensure that their self-evaluation is rigorous and leads to further school improvement. Professional development and induction for new staff supports them in beginning to develop their understanding of Catholic life and mission.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

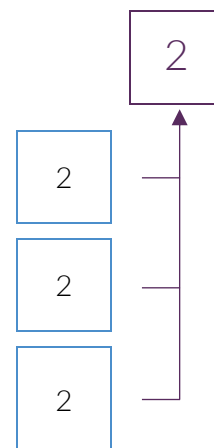
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Pupils are achieving a good standard in religious education. Many demonstrate a developing confidence in their understanding and use of religious vocabulary, which allows pupils to articulate and recall their learning more precisely and with increasing depth. Pupils show an ability to link their knowledge of scripture to their own experiences, fostering a meaningful connection between learning and everyday life. Pupils enthusiastically engage in lessons and show curiosity about religious stories and traditions. One pupil remarked, 'I love religious education because it shows how Jesus works through us'. Pupils enjoy their learning and approach their lessons with interest and enthusiasm; therefore, behaviour in most lessons is good. Books are consistently well presented, reflecting pride in pupils' work, a respect for the subject and good progress over time. Overall, the quality of pupils' work shows a developing maturity and willingness to engage with complex ideas in a respectful and thoughtful manner. For example, in a Year 6 class, pupils were able to discuss how poverty can imprison people. Many pupils know how well they are doing in their religious education as a result of teachers challenging them to extend their thinking and improve their work. A pupil explained, 'we are expected to improve our use of religious words and include more scripture.'

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge. They build well on prior learning and plan a range of tasks to ensure that pupils can demonstrate their understanding and knowledge in different and creative ways. Activities include discussions, reflections, writing and role play, enabling pupils to demonstrate their understanding. One pupil stated that religious education 'is not like any other subject; we do different things like acting, discussing and reading scripture.' Where teaching is strong, questioning is used purposefully to challenge thinking, probe for deeper understanding, and encourage pupils to reflect on their own beliefs and values. Pupil effort is celebrated, leading to good levels of motivation from pupils. Many are regularly provided

with next steps, which help them to improve and reflect on their learning. In some classes pupils are challenged with further questions to extend their thinking. This good practice now needs to be consistently applied across the school. Pupils with additional needs are well supported through adapted resources and additional adults to enable them to make progress. Overall, the quality of provision supports both academic progress and the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of all pupils. One parent explained that their children come home 'full of stories about what they've learned - especially in religious education, where their growing understanding of the faith constantly amazes us.'

Leaders and governors have ensured that the curriculum is faithful to the *Religious Education Directory* and a clear programme is in place for its full implementation. Religious education is given parity with other subjects, including resourcing. Parents report that they are kept well informed about their children's learning in religious education, with some saying that they 'learn from their children'. The subject leader has a clear and strategic vision for the subject, with an accurate understanding of current strengths and areas requiring development. This vision is actively communicated with colleagues and used to guide improvements in teaching and learning. The subject leader provides tailored support and guidance to colleagues, which is beginning to build confidence and consistency across the team. Good use is made of training and support from the diocese to assist subject leadership as well as teaching in religious education. Monitoring and evaluation processes are robust and well established. Regular book scrutinies and lesson observations ensure that standards are consistently reviewed and celebrated. Assessment judgements are validated through collaboration with the wider deanery and diocesan networks, which strengthens the accuracy and reliability of internal evaluations and informs effective action planning. Governors have an awareness of the importance of ongoing evaluation to inform the strategic development of religious education. They now need to ensure that this knowledge develops greater rigour in their self-evaluation and the momentum for improvement is maintained.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

2

Pupils value the opportunities to build a closer relationship with God through prayer with a child sharing that 'when we pray our hearts are closer to God's heart'. Pupils respond positively when invited to participate in worship and are able to reflect in silence. There are opportunities for pupils to experience different types of prayer, including singing, music, reflection and spontaneous prayer. The prayer life of the school reflects the Church's liturgical year, so pupils have a good understanding of the liturgical year. Pupils from the youngest age are beginning to have a good knowledge of the structure of prayer and liturgy. Pupils across the school can describe the components of gathering, listening, responding and going forth because all sections are modelled and planned well. Pupils clearly understand that prayer and liturgy leads to mission and action. Pupils are developing their skills in planning and preparing their own prayer and liturgy relevant to their age. They do so with increasing confidence and are well supported by adults. Pupils are beginning to evaluate the prayer and liturgy; however, because provision is evaluated informally they are only sometimes clear about improving their spiritual worship in tangible ways. One pupil shared that 'our role as chaplains is to make sure everyone's ministry comes together so we can all have a closer relationship with God'.

Prayer and liturgy are central to school life. Prayer routines are a solid feature in the school day and there is a wide range of opportunities for marking moments of joy and sorrow in prayer, including praying the Angelus daily when the bell is rung. Staff are committed to developing their skills in assisting pupils to plan, deliver and evaluate and appreciate the training they have been given. However, routines of pupil-led prayer and liturgy are not yet consistent across the school. Scripture is used consistently during prayer and liturgy and pupils know the importance of the Bible. They can articulate ways scripture has led them to action. One of the school chaplains explained, 'we know if we have been successful by the way we live out the message we have

explored from scripture'. Families are highly involved in the prayer life of the school with the Reception children and their families attending Mass for the blessing of their school bag and Year 6 pupils attending Mass before their residential trip. House and class Masses are also embedded across the school. One parent highlighted that 'a stand-out moment for us as a family was the excitement my son felt when receiving the prayer bag; we prayed the Rosary, shared school prayers at bed and meal times and my son even created his own prayer to share with the class'.

The prayer and liturgy policy provides the school with a framework for liturgical celebrations and progression of prayer across the school in order to build up skills of participation. Leaders and governors highly value staff formation, specifically in planning and delivering prayer and liturgy across the school. Leaders ensure that staff can access bespoke training from the diocese to support staff in different ways of praying. Leaders support staff and they are open to self-development and new concepts; however, the impact of support on pupil-led prayer and liturgy, and the evaluation of this, is yet to be fully embedded. Leaders have developed a long-term plan to ensure that significant liturgical events and days are celebrated, with regular opportunities for the school community to attend Mass. Furthermore, the parish priest, who is also a governor, visits pupils regularly during the school year for Reconciliation, as well as inviting classes to a weekly parish Mass where pupils and staff are given time for quiet, prayerful reflection. Routine monitoring influences the school's self-evaluation; however, leaders and governors recognise the need for greater rigour in their evaluation of prayer and liturgy.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	102329
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3113501
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Hornchurch Road, Hornchurch, RM12 4TL
School phone number	01708448530
Headteacher	Garth Tucker
Chair of governors	Tim Nagle
School Website	www.stmaryscatholicprimary.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Gael Hicks	Lead
Angela O'Hara	Team
Katherine Parker	Team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement