CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INSPECTION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND ACADEMIES

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 103085

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Brentwood

14 October 2026 – 15 October 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness — 2

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.3) — 1

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

Religious education (p.5) — 2

The quality of curriculum religious education

Collective worship (p.7) — 2

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

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 diocesan directives	Yes
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

This Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection was carried out under canons 804 & 806 of the code of canon law. For maintained schools and academies in England it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.48 of the Education Act 2005. For maintained schools and academies in Wales it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.50 of the Education Act 2005.

What the school does well

- Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to St Mary's. They are committed to living out the school's mission in all that they do, which is reflected in their exemplary behaviour.
- The school's commitment to Catholic social teaching is very strong and clearly evident in their beautifully presented Catholic life and mission journals.
- There is an exceptionally strong sense of welcome and community which is greatly valued and appreciated by parents.
- The religious education leader has a clear vision for the teaching of religious education and is highly committed to ensuring improvements are implemented.
- Pupils are keen to participate in the prayer and liturgy opportunities provided by the school, and their enthusiastic and joyous singing enhances this provision.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure teachers use questioning skilfully during lessons to identify precisely where pupils are in their understanding, and adapt explanations and tasks to increasingly engage and maximise learning for all pupils.
- Ensure leaders' and governors' self-evaluation of religious education demonstrates forensic monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge that results in strategic action and in well-targeted planning which leads to outstanding outcomes.
- Ensure leaders are highly effective in facilitating others to plan and lead experiences of prayer and liturgy that are engaging, of a consistently high quality, and which are accessible and meaningful.

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

1

Pupil outcomes

1

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

Provision

1

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

Leadership

1

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

Pupils greatly value the Catholic identity of the school and embrace St Mary's mission to 'love God, love others and love ourselves'. They strive to live this out by welcoming others and showing kindness. Pupils increasingly reflect on the meaning of the mission statement as they progress through the school. One Year 6 pupil explains that it 'means a lot to me, as it shows us how St Mary's School should be'. Pupils know their class saints well and recognise them as role models. They are happy, confident and feel secure, understanding that they are made in God's image and likeness. One parent confirmed that their child feels 'confident, supported and cared for at school'. Pupils confidently articulate their responsibility to follow Jesus' example and care for others, with one explaining that 'it is our job to live as Jesus' example, to care for each other like Jesus wants us to'. They respond to Catholic social teaching through the Mini Vinnies, fundraising for Missio during Advent and other charitable initiatives throughout the year. Pupils are respectful, polite and well-mannered, demonstrating exemplary behaviour. They value opportunities for spiritual reflection provided through the school's chaplaincy.

The school's clear mission statement is known and lived out in daily life. Staff describe it as central to the school, reflected in the kindness, respect and support shown to one another. One parent commented, 'St Mary's is a wonderful school with a strong Catholic ethos and lived mission, as well as core values that run through the entire school'. Parents recognise the strength of the Catholic ethos and how the mission and core values underpin the school community. An exceptional welcome begins before pupils join the school, through home visits and a family picnic during the summer holidays. Parents value this strong sense of belonging,

further strengthened by Friends of St Mary's events, including Christmas and summer fairs. Staff provide highly effective pastoral care, including interventions such as art therapy to support vulnerable pupils. The school environment reflects its Catholic identity through statues of Our Lady, class saints and attractive displays promoting Catholic social teaching, clearly linked to scripture. Displays celebrating diversity reinforce the dignity and uniqueness of every individual. The school demonstrates a strong commitment to pupils' holistic development, providing opportunities to deepen their moral understanding through Catholic social teaching and charitable activities. These experiences encourage pupils to recognise their responsibility towards others and put Catholic values into practice. The school's mission is evident in its welcoming community and commitment to nurturing every pupil's spiritual, moral and personal development. Relationships, sex and health education meets diocesan expectations.

Leaders and governors clearly articulate the school's mission, ensuring Christ remains at the centre of this loving community. Leaders engage actively with the diocese, attending professional development opportunities and inviting the link adviser to provide training for staff and governors. The school and parish work closely together, benefiting from strong links with the thriving parish St Vincent de Paul Society, which has established the enthusiastic Mini Vinnies group. The school demonstrates a strong commitment to Catholic social teaching, providing curriculum opportunities and events rooted in scripture. For example, investment in mental health and wellbeing support for pupils and staff, alongside anti-bullying initiatives, reflects the principles of human dignity and respect for the rights of others. This commitment enriches the Catholic curriculum, enabling pupils to reflect on social justice through initiatives such as Red Wednesday. Year 6 pupils also visit a local care home, providing opportunities to develop compassion and solidarity through service to others. Governors bring an increasing range of expertise to support the school's mission and demonstrate high levels of ambition. Leaders' self-evaluation processes are focused, although more systematic approaches to gathering pupils' views would strengthen their understanding of the impact of Catholic life and mission. New staff receive appropriate induction, and professional development opportunities for staff in this area are increasing. These developments support a shared understanding of the school's mission and its practical expression in daily life.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

2

Pupil outcomes

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

2

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

Leadership

2

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

Pupils develop secure knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education, reflecting the learning required by the *Religious Education Directory*. Retrieval questions at the beginning of lessons enable pupils to recall prior learning and make connections with new knowledge, supporting them to know more and remember more. Pupils reflect spiritually and are beginning to think ethically and theologically. Pupils speak with growing confidence about their learning, using subject-specific vocabulary. In Year 2, one pupil explained, 'Baptism gives you a fresh start and you can be free from sin.' Pupils now need further opportunities to develop their skills in asking questions of adults and peers. Pupils work collaboratively and independently, responding positively to teacher questioning and support. In a Year 6 lesson about water in baptism, one pupil commented, 'I would have been surprised that John the Baptist was baptising Jesus, as he is the Son of God and free from Original Sin.' Another independently linked the cleansing power of water to the parting of the Red Sea. These responses demonstrate developing theological understanding and the ability to make connections across scripture. Pupils enjoy religious education and engage positively in lessons, particularly through paired discussion and creative activities. One pupil commented, 'I enjoy religious education lessons as we get to use artwork to express what we have learnt and can show our feelings and emotions.' Pupils' work demonstrates emerging creativity. Teacher feedback celebrates learning and supports progress, while scaffolds, adaptations and vocabulary enable pupils with additional needs to develop their religious literacy.

Teachers are developing secure subject knowledge and an understanding of how pupils learn at different stages. Support from the subject leader and diocesan training have strengthened this development. Teachers communicate the value of religious education through high expectations and positive attitudes to learning. Lessons draw on a range of diocesan resources, enabling pupils to access learning and build on prior knowledge. Teachers recognise the contribution of religious education to pupils' moral and spiritual development, providing opportunities for reflection. Questioning is used to assess pupils' understanding; however, teachers now need to use questioning more skilfully to adapt explanations and tasks, address misconceptions and maximise learning for all pupils. Teachers establish positive learning environments where pupils' efforts are celebrated through the Golden Book, celebration assemblies, displays, house points and the weekly newsletter. The whole-school approach to feedback helps pupils understand their achievements and identify next steps. Teachers consistently prioritise religious vocabulary to develop pupils' religious literacy. Pupils present their learning through varied forms of expression, including role play, artwork and music. Task design now needs to be refined to ensure pupils are consistently challenged to deepen their theological understanding and make meaningful connections between concepts and scripture. Good quality resources and the effective deployment of additional adults support learning. The school now needs to ensure that teachers use assessment effectively to adapt teaching and provide consistently challenging learning opportunities that strengthen pupils' religious understanding and extend their knowledge.

Leaders and governors demonstrate a clear commitment to ensuring the curriculum faithfully reflects *the Religious Education Directory.* Religious education has parity with other core subjects in curriculum time, resourcing, curriculum design and professional development, reflecting leaders' high expectations for continued improvement. The passionate subject leader has a clear vision for teaching and learning, articulates strengths and is committed to improvement. Working effectively with the diocese, she has developed a well-sequenced curriculum rooted in scripture and Catholic social teaching. Staff professional development strengthens subject knowledge, confidence and consistency in planning. Leaders enrich religious education through opportunities including the Year 6 retreat to Walsingham House, a theatre production on the school's feast day and online workshops. Curriculum planning considers the needs of different groups of pupils, with additional adults appropriately resourced and trained to support learning. The link governor visits regularly and demonstrates a good understanding of how religious education is taught. Leaders and governors now need to ensure that self-evaluation incorporates more forensic monitoring, searching analysis and rigorous self-challenge, so that strengths and areas for development are accurately identified and inform improvement priorities.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

2

Pupil outcomes

2

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

Provision

2

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

2

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

Pupils participate enthusiastically in the prayer and liturgy opportunities provided by the school. They reflect in silence and join confidently in singing. In Reception, newly arrived pupils quickly learn hymns with actions and sing with enthusiasm, demonstrating their developing sense of belonging to the praying community. Pupils are beginning to develop confidence in spontaneous prayer. For example, a Year 2 pupil prayed, 'Dear God, please help me to be kind to everyone no matter what they are like'. Pupils speak confidently about the liturgical year, including prayers for those who died in wars during the November Remembrance service. Pupils willingly collaborate with adults and their peers to plan and lead prayer and liturgy, including writing their own prayers. They are beginning to evaluate these experiences. Pupils make connections between prayer and liturgy and their wider learning, writing prayers of thanksgiving for Creation and, in Year 6, for their residential visit to the Isle of Wight. Pupils recognise the value of prayer. One explained that prayer 'makes us closer to God', while another said, 'prayer strengthens my trust in God and helps me go through tough times'. Some pupils understand how prayer inspires action; one described praying for people without food and then donating food to the food bank. The school now needs to develop pupils' ability to evaluate prayer and liturgy more deeply and strengthen their understanding of how prayer inspires sustained action in daily life.

Prayer is central to the school's daily life and rhythm, with significant moments celebrated through prayer and liturgy, including thanksgiving at Harvest and reflection on the Stations of the Cross during Lent. Staff model a range of prayer forms rooted in the Catholic tradition, including the Rosary club in October. However, pupils are not yet offered a sufficiently broad

range of engaging and creative experiences reflecting the richness of this tradition. Scripture is selected appropriately to reflect the liturgical year, although leaders now need to ensure that scripture is intrinsically linked to the purpose and content of each celebration. Staff are developing their skills in supporting pupils to plan and lead prayer and liturgy through a consistent structure of gathering, listening, responding and mission. Creative approaches, including artwork for reflection, are emerging but are not yet consistently embedded. The parish church is used effectively for Mass, while classroom prayer focus areas provide appropriate settings for class liturgies. In Reception, pupils sit in a circle within a dedicated sacred space. Staff create a suitable atmosphere that enables prayer to be experienced as a special time. Families are welcomed to assemblies and class Masses, and strong parish links support pupils' participation. One parent recognised that 'Children all have an opportunity to be weekly prayer leaders, and parents are invited to Mass with the children'. However, the school has not yet consistently developed the breadth, and creativity of prayer and liturgy. Leaders now need to ensure that pupils' responses and the mission arising from prayer and liturgy are meaningfully connected to scripture. They should also strengthen opportunities for pupils to lead and evaluate prayer and liturgy, enabling them to reflect more deeply on their experiences.

Leaders have recently reviewed the prayer and liturgy policy, which includes guidance on developing pupils' participation as they progress through the school. A clear calendar of events linked to the liturgical year ensures pupils attend Mass on holy days of obligation. Leaders prioritise resources and provide staff with professional development to support the planning of prayer and liturgy. Leaders and governors demonstrate a good understanding of provision across the school. However, planning now needs to ensure that staff and pupils consistently deliver high quality experiences that reflect the richness of the Catholic tradition and support pupils' spiritual development. The school now needs to embed the systematic evaluation of prayer and liturgy within its self-evaluation cycle. This should include gathering pupils' views, monitoring the quality and impact of celebrations, and identifying precise areas for improvement. Leaders should use this evidence to refine staff development, strengthen pupil leadership and ensure that improvements demonstrably enhance pupils' experiences, participation and understanding of prayer and liturgy.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	103085
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3203300
Full postal address of the school	St Marys Catholic Primary School, Station Road, London, E4 7BJ
School phone number	020 8529 4723
Headteacher or Head of School	Jessica Sharkey
Chair of Governors	Timothy King
School Website	www.stmaryschingford.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
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	18 March 2020
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

Gael Hicks	Lead
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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