



St Mary Magdalen’s Catholic Primary School

Spring Street Brighton BN1 3EF
 School Unique Reference Number: 114541

Inspection date:	30 – 06 - 2014
Lead Inspector:	Mr Stephen Beck
Associate Inspector:	Ms Anne O’Sullivan
Headteacher:	Mrs Halden Eady
Chair of Governors:	Mrs A Kingsley

	Previous Inspection:	2
Overall Effectiveness	This inspection:	1
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Catholic Life:		1
Collective Worship:		1
Religious Education:		2

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Mary Magdalen’s is an outstanding Catholic school because:

<p>St Mary Magdalen’s is an outstanding Catholic school because;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The school’s mission statement is fully embedded in school life with the school living out its aim to value and celebrate the rich diversity within the school. ▪ Pupils explicitly celebrate their different backgrounds and cultures. 	<p>The quality of collective worship is outstanding because;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective worship is given a high priority and forms a central part of the life of the school. • Acts of collective worship are well planned, have a clear purpose and reflect the liturgical year, religious education topics or relevant themes.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff work hard to model the Gospel values which are evidenced in their relationships with pupils, colleagues, parents and governors. ▪ The religious education coordinator has done an outstanding job preparing to hand over to her well qualified and enthusiastic successor. The school is to be commended for succession planning that is established practice in the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commendable use is made of time to share with pupils and parents of different faith backgrounds and celebrate a very diverse community. ▪ Acts of worship are engaging for pupils who are active and enthusiastic participants. ▪ Worship opportunities are imaginative.
<p>The Catholic life of the school is outstanding because;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The school’s mission statement is fully embedded in school life with the school living out its aim to value and celebrate. ▪ Of the rich diversity within the school with pupils explicitly celebrating their different backgrounds and cultures. ▪ There is a consistently determined commitment to the most vulnerable and needy in both policy and practice that serves the community very effectively. 	<p>The quality of religious education is good with outstanding elements because;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and faith commitment. ▪ It supports the accurate use of religious language and vocabulary by pupils. ▪ Pupils’ behaviour within lessons and round the school is of a very high order. ▪ Pupils concentrate very well and take pride in their religious education workbooks.

Progress has been made since the last inspection that has seen the school progress the points for action, although these remain relevant in the context of the school moving to the new diocesan approved ‘Come and See’ religious education programme and its own self-evaluation.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary Magdalen’s Catholic Primary School is an inner city school situated in the Brighton Deanery of the Arundel and Brighton Diocese. It is maintained by the Brighton and Hove Local Authority. There are currently 257 pupils on roll, with the number of whom who are Catholic having risen from the previous inspection to 63%. The school serves the local Parish of St Mary Magdalen and the surrounding area with a significant number of pupils coming from surrounding parishes.

There is a strong Polish community which forms 19% of the current pupil intake with many of these families attending their ethnic chaplaincy mass in the local parish. St Mary Magdalen's has a distinctive Catholic/Christian mission, recognising the uniqueness of every individual which links closely to the diverse backgrounds of the children who attend the school. Approximately 60% of pupils speak English as an additional language with a total of 24 different languages spoken; for many of them, starting school is their first introduction to life in England. Pupils are taught within a strong Catholic ethos and are expected to show respect for all faiths and cultures. The school has a high number of Coptic Christians as well as pupils who are Muslim and Buddhist. A high percentage of pupils, at 28%, is eligible for free school meals. The number of identified pupils needing additional help as recorded on the school's SEN register is high at 30%. The teaching staff comprises of 11 full time and 3 part time staff, 86% of whom are Catholic. Two teachers hold the Catholic Teachers' Certificate or other Catholic qualification. Pupils start school in the Nursery as part of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Continue the development of the tracking of individual pupil progress and good assessment procedures already in place. This should be targeted at ensuring all pupils, particularly the more able, are given challenging goals, achieve appropriately and are provided with a wider range of activities through increasing opportunities for independent learning, thereby raising attainment further.
- Secure greater consistency in marking and feedback across the school to ensure pupils are aware of their next steps in religious education.
- Develop the religious education section of the school's web site to celebrate the religious education curriculum and further strengthen information links with parents.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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- The school has, in preparation for the new curriculum for September 2014, been reflecting on the core drivers for the school and its community. All members of the school community, pupils, staff, governors and parents participated. Pupils reflected on their own feelings with regards to the mission statement and displays of their reflections were exhibited around the school. Pupils then created a new 'strap line' for the school, focussing on God being the centre of all we do and the importance of education. This resulted in a Year1 pupil's contribution "Together in God's love we stand; learning and friendship hand in hand" being adopted.
- The school's mission statement is now fully embedded in school life with the school living out its aim to value and celebrate the rich diversity within the school. Pupils explicitly celebrate their different backgrounds and cultures. Staff work hard to model the Gospel values, which are evidenced in their relationships with pupils, colleagues, parents and governors.
- Pupils are kind, considerate and supportive of each other. They are actively involved in the planning and delivery of a very good programme of collective worship including attendance at Mass in the local parish. They are spiritual, love to pray and fully engage in opportunities for worship.
- When a new pupil joins the school, systems and day to day practice enable them to settle quickly and support transition to a new school and in many cases, a new country. This is a great strength of the school.
- Several members of the school community have been baptised and welcomed into the church since joining the school reflecting the school's commitment to evangelisation. A parent summed up the school by saying, *"This is one of the nicest environments – children are accepted for who they are, not where they come from. A beautiful, lovely school."*

The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school

- The school looks for every opportunity to develop each pupil's spiritual, moral and cultural development, within a small school environment in which all staff are committed to meeting the children's needs. Pupils and their families are offered commendably wide ranging additional support programmes which include; nurture groups, circles of friends, social skills groups, school council, pastoral care groups, a buddy system, lunch squad led by a teaching assistant, learning mentor time, school counsellor, an after school 'prayer club', Family Support Worker, enhanced school nurse provision (with regular drop in advice sessions), Educational Welfare Assistant' support for vulnerable families, liaison with outside agencies to ensure the best possible support to all pupils, especially those with significant needs, housing support, links with other local community based charities, e.g. Voices in Exile who offer support to families seeking asylum or those who have recently arrived from abroad, Triple P Parenting Group (currently Polish), Family Learning and English lessons for parents.

- Pupils are given opportunities to visit a local Buddhist centre, local mosque and in recent years a Jewish school in Brighton. Hanukkah cards were sent to them and were very well received.
- The school supports several different charities, some local and some further afield. The active PTA gives a percentage of its profits each year to Mary's Meals and the school has joined the Mary's Meal 'Back Pack' appeal.
- During Advent each class was given £10 to raise money for the victims in the Philippines. This cross curricular link with 'Enterprise' saw over £800 raised. This was made very pertinent for pupils through the link with one of the catering staff who had relatives affected by the disaster.
- Each year the school celebrates 'One World Week' when each class studies a different country, exploring the different customs and traditions. Parents help with this through a wealth of experience the school can call upon as exemplified by one father who had been a champion fruit carver in Thailand. He carved a water melon into a flower while pupils watched on in awe.
- Pupils are focussed during lessons; they are polite and welcoming to others and enjoy learning.
- Clear policies and structures are in place that provide the highest levels of pastoral care
- There is an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable and needy in both policy and practice that serves the community very effectively.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The governors of St Mary Magdalen's are fully committed to developing the Catholic life of the school and are to be commended for their awareness of the importance of succession planning. Governors produce a 'Governors' Report to Parents' each year, reflecting on different aspects of the school. They show a fervent commitment to improving the school. Their strength rests in an understanding of the challenges faced and an unequivocal drive for improvement.
- The headteacher's leadership provides a strong vision and sense of purpose. All members of the school community are committed to deepening their own sense of spirituality and faith as well as providing opportunities for this to grow within the pupils.
- A teaching assistant has recently worked with the school's learning mentor to transform lunchtimes. She has set up a team of 'Lunch Squad' children who help teach games and ensure fair play in the playground.

- Governors attend prayer times, assemblies and worship wherever possible. They have carried out learning walks looking at and evaluating the school environment.
- School self-evaluation has identified the school's main strengths and areas for development. It would be more focussed through stronger links with the new Section 48 self-evaluation toolkit and wider contributions from the school community.
- The school has an excellent Chair of Governors who is knowledgeable, committed and proactive in ensuring the strong Catholic ethos of the school is supported, maintained and developed.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP / PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship

- Pupils enjoy assemblies which offer a variety of different experiences and opportunities to help pupils access the key messages being shared. They are used to enhance and deepen their moral values, spirituality and faith.
- A pupil commented on an assembly based on the theme of the Holy Trinity, reflecting that he had decided that it was like his family. He is the eldest of three brothers and tries to lead and look after his younger brothers; his middle brother is always making everyone happy and is always helping others, like Jesus, and his youngest brother is very loving and giving like the Holy Spirit. He saw the youngest member of the family, his sister, as a special gift from God.
- For exemplification good use is made of music, film clips, stories, drama, power point presentations, visual artefacts and symbols and Makaton (where possible).
- Staff share their own personal experiences and 'real life' experiences of others as appropriate which helps pupils to contextualise the themes to their own lives.
- Pupils prepare their own services for class based liturgies and take a leading role in preparing whole class assemblies to which parents are invited. They also prepare displays and choose prayers and reflections. The older pupils also choose passages from the Bible that reflect a theme or reinforce a teaching point.

- In an excellent and inclusive assembly attended, all pupils were able to successfully understand and dynamically demonstrate the spreading of the 'good news'. Staff showed considerable confidence in pupils to all move around the hall modelling how the good news is spread. There was strong evidence of religious literacy in the questions posed and answers given. Pupils enthusiastic singing was further enhanced by solo cantors. It is commendable how fully engaged staff were in this celebration.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship

- There is a good range of different experiences provided for pupils to which parents are always invited to join in. These include, assemblies, prayer groups, morning prayer and reflection in the playground during Lent, Advent, October and May, as well as every Friday.
- Pupils join the parish for Mass regularly throughout the year and on specific feast days and special times of the year. A link parishioner comes in to school each Friday morning to lead praying of the Rosary.
- Opportunities are provided to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation for staff and pupils during Lent and Advent and several other services and celebrations are held throughout the year. The school offers times for pupils, staff and parents to meditate and reflect.
- All classes have dedicated prayer tables or corners in classrooms. A whole school review of these would secure a consistency of approach to ensure they are assigned a prime place in the classroom and become a more useful tool to support classroom religious education.
- Commendable use is made of opportunities to share with pupils and parents of different faith backgrounds and celebrate what is a very diverse community. Parents have been invited to talk about their faith and this has proved invaluable in helping develop a sense of respect and shared values within the school community.
- This has included talks from parents who are Buddhist, Sikh, Muslim and another parent who had attended a Jewish school. A Muslim pupil asked if she could show the rest of the school how she prayed. She brought in her mat and prayer beads and used a compass to find out which direction was east. Other pupils were fascinated and this led to a group of Coptic Christian boys asking if they could share one of their litanies in which one pupil acted as cantor and three others joined in the responses and played percussion instruments. Father Johan from the Coptic Church joined this assembly.
- The recognition that pupils attend different parishes and have well developed links with other priests, e.g. the Polish priest who celebrates a Polish mass at St Mary Magdalen's church every Sunday is well supported and managed to the benefit of the community as a whole.

- The school has good links with Cardinal Newman secondary school. The secondary school has led several 'Missions' at St Mary Magdalene's with some of their older pupils leading the younger pupils in activities, prayer and reflection.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship

- Whole school liturgies are planned in accordance with the Church's year and the religious education curriculum. They link with weekly Gospel readings.
- Staff are excellent role models for pupils and participate fully in collective worship.
- There are strong links with other schools within the deanery which share opportunities to celebrate together.
- The religious education co-ordinator attends diocesan training and courses. Information and ideas are then cascaded to other staff members. Recent training covered, planning and preparing collective worship. This has been extremely valuable. A programme is already planned for new staff.
- Whilst the parish priest does not have a high profile within the school the pupils are welcomed into the parish Church for a range of celebrations and liturgies.
- There is a system to evaluate the outcomes of collective working. This included a recent survey of pupils. This approach will help the school to develop this provision further.
- The school is proactive in providing as broad a range of liturgical experiences as possible. As a parent wrote, *"The school nurtures each child as an individual and brings them together as a family."*

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Attainment is generally good. The school's own lesson observations and work scrutiny have suggested that the standard of teaching is good with some outstanding elements. The inspectors have been able to validate this.
- A recent pupil survey provided evidence that pupils recognise the importance that is placed on religious education across the school and in all areas of school life. Pupils are clear about the importance of their faith and know it is integral to school life.
- Staff are planning to extend more able pupils and ensure that assessment tasks provide opportunity for the higher levels to be achieved and this should be made a priority.
- In a Year 3 lesson on the Sacrament of Reconciliation good use was made of religious vocabulary. The teacher used a video clip of her contemporaries explaining why this sacrament was important to them. Pupils picked up on their comment that reconciliation is like, 'Calpol' – medicine for your spirit'.
- Pupils express a love of religious education lessons. As one pupil said, *"I love history and religious education is rich in history"*.
- Pupils with specific learning needs are very well served by teachers and support staff who work seamlessly together to ensure these pupils are fully included and their work celebrated.
- Pupils particularly value more creative tasks that challenge their understanding and these opportunities should be further developed.
- Achievement in religious education is at least in line with other core subjects and on many occasions exceeds them.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education

- Teaching is generally good throughout the school. Teachers are aware of the need to plan for pupils to learn from and respond to 'Come and See' topics.
- Assessment tasks are moderated and well planned. Books and displays show good coverage of the 'Come and See' topics. Pupils take a great pride in their work. Verbal comments are recorded, especially in Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
- Marking is developing with good examples of the use of Assessment for Learning. Where practice is most effective comments clearly indicate the next steps in learning and there is opportunity for pupils to respond to comments. This should now be further shared to secure consistency across the school.

- There has been an emphasis on the development of monitoring the assessment of religious education throughout the school. Staff meeting time has been dedicated to developing assessment practice and assessment tasks have been agreed between year groups; as a result, levelling is more secure and consistent.
- Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and faith commitment. This is a strength of the school that serves to enthuse pupils. This supports the accurate use of religious language and vocabulary by pupils.
- Lessons would benefit from a less didactic approach that facilitated more opportunities for independent learning and challenge for the more able.
- The best lessons are marked by strong classroom management, high expectations, appropriate pace, consistent building on previous learning and a mix of learning strategies.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

- Quality First Teaching Audits are carried out each term by senior members of staff and in recent years with governors, giving an overall judgement of a teacher's performance. The audits include: monitoring of planning, a work scrutiny, looking at assessment data and lesson observation. Teachers are given clear guidance of how judgements are made and feedback is used to further develop effective practice and enhance pupils' learning.
- Following the departure of the religious education coordinator the deputy headteacher has stepped in mid-year to take over the in the interregnum. She has done excellent job pulling together information and gathering evidence to support accurate self-evaluation. She has started to hand over to the school's new religious education co-ordinator. The current religious education coordinator has done an outstanding job preparing to hand over to her well qualified and enthusiastic successor. The school is to be commended for this element of succession planning that is established practice in the school.
- All staff accept responsibility to inspire the whole community and to the religious, moral and spiritual development of pupils and all staff are totally committed to this and its promotion.
- Planning for religious education is based on teaching the pupils about God, living out the Gospel values and promoting and encouraging pupils on their spiritual journey to God.
- Classroom focal points lack consistency and would benefit from the implementation of a 'whole school' approach.

Summary of Inspection Judgements

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

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Catholic Life

1

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

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The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

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How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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Collective Worship

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.

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The quality of provision for Collective Worship

1

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

2

Religious Education

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

2

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education

2

How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education

1