

Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 118195

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Philip Egan, Bishop of Portsmouth on:

Date: 3 - 4 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....

3

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.....

3

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference



The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop



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

Partially

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour exemplify the mission to 'Live, Love and Believe'. They are proud of their school and the roles they undertake that allow them to contribute positively to life at St Mary's.

The executive headteacher has ensured the Catholic mission of the school is central to many areas of school life and that it remains pivotal in the drive for improvement at St Mary's School.

The value placed on relationships is evident throughout all aspects of school life. Good relationships have been nurtured and communication is good. The result is a strong sense of community and teamwork.

There are many engaging opportunities for spiritual development. These range from pupils being offered a variety of liturgies and approaches to prayer, to the imaginative use of the school grounds to enhance their spirituality.

What the school needs to improve:

Improve teacher subject knowledge and pedagogy so pupils make good progress and are confident in discussing their learning.

Ensure the religious education curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to progress sequentially through the agreed subject content and knowledge.

Refine school self-evaluation across all aspects of the inspection framework; ensuring future self-evaluation leads to appropriate, timely and impactful improvement targets, which are rigorously tracked and reviewed by school leaders and the governing body.

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:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2

The school's mission to, 'Live, Love and Believe' sits at the centre of the community of St Mary's School, with its importance being recognised by pupils, staff, parents and governors. The pupils understand they are striving to live as Jesus taught us stating, 'We try to love and forgive, it's hard, it's not just for school but for life.' Although the principles of Catholic Social Teaching have been introduced they are not yet embedded in the curriculum and school life. However, pupils recognise the importance of living their faith in supporting charitable projects, internationally through CAFOD and closer to home as they fundraise for the Earl Mountbatten Hospice. They are also working hard on their project, 'Rubbish Rebellion' that showcases the school's engagement with the stewardship of God's creation. The pupils have been involved in creating their own 'Bee-haviour Code' which allows them to own positive behaviour and challenge choices that fall outside of the code. As a result pupils are respectful, considerate, and proud of their school. One member of staff said that, 'Our children demonstrate their understanding of God's love in the way they treat one another.' The pupils value the opportunities that the school's chaplaincy gives them, being keen to take on the various leadership roles that have been introduced this year, wearing their ambassador lanyards with pride.

The revised mission statement is owned and understood by staff who work conscientiously to support continuing improvement in the school. The executive headteacher is passionate about her faith and sharing it with the school family. There is a strong sense of community at St Mary's, as exemplified by the welcome on the gate each morning to families, hospitality given to all visitors and the positive role models of staff. Parent voice is valued, as highlighted by 'Coffee, Cake and Chat' sessions, which provide regular opportunities for feedback to school leadership. The result of these many actions are good relationships. Responses to the parent survey were positive, with one

remarking, 'The staff work incredibly hard to ensure that the Catholic mission of the school is evident throughout.' The environment reflects the school's Catholic nature and character of the school. Care and attention are given to prayer focal points that are attractive and reflect the liturgical season. Displays in the hall highlight the value placed on pupil leadership, celebration of effort through the house point system and the introduction of Catholic Social Teaching within the school community, meanwhile outside, the grotto to Our Lady enhances the school's Marian tradition. The school's chaplaincy is developing well with chaplaincy ambassadors growing in confidence as they are coached in their role by knowledgeable staff. Pupils now need to be planning high quality worship with greater independence. The school follows the 'Life to the Full' programme for its relationship, sex and health education programme. This approach encourages the education of the whole person, recognising all are made in the image of God and live in community, and so have responsibility towards others. St Mary's Pre-school ensures the children begin their St Mary's journey in a safe and happy environment where children learn about Christ and the Gospel values as well as how we pray during the school day.

Governors recognise the improvements already made at St Mary's. Governors commented, 'The journey that the school is on has led to a feeling of cohesion, positivity and energy – where the faith is evident,' and they have centred their strategic vision and school improvement on the school mission statement. Governors are ambitious for the school; there is evidence of challenge, however, this is not consistent and their role in monitoring and evaluation is not fully established. The school would benefit from greater focused and more timely monitoring in the areas covered in this report. Leaders in the school engage in diocesan support and training, the impact of which was seen in classroom practice and staff feedback. There is a positive relationship with the parish, with the parish priest's ministry valued by all. The parish priest remarked, 'there is a good engagement from both the children in their worship and in the new leadership.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

3

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

3

Provision

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

3

Leadership

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

3

For a significant minority of pupil the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills are insufficiently developed. Similarly, while some pupils are making good progress, for others this progress is less rapid. This has resulted in the pupils' religious literacy being more limited, and so the ability to reflect and discuss various elements of religious education can be curtailed. While some children are able to use the vocabulary and their understanding to express themselves clearly and with confidence others were not as articulate. Pupils do engage well in lessons and work well both as independent learners, using their initiative, and with others. The quality of the learning in books is variable and there are limited opportunities for pupils to self-assess their achievements; consequently, they are not always clear on what they need to do to improve. Where there is work of a good standard it is well planned, progress notable and feedback effective. The good practice that is seen in some year groups needs to be shared across the school to support improvement in religious education.

Religious education is viewed as an important subject at St Mary's and pupils recognise its importance and enjoy their learning, one pupil remarking, 'RE has changed since we have had our new headteacher. Our teachers try to make it interesting and "The Big Question" makes us really think and shows us what we've learnt.' However, not all teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and how to teach religious education effectively. Where good teaching is evident then learning journeys are coherent, questioning is effective, teachers use assessment at the point of learning and feedback supports individual progress and engage pupils in a conversation about their learning. Many teachers rely on hands-up when questioning; enabling pupils to opt out of learning. Feedback does not always support progress. Again, best practice in the school needs to be shared. Progress is also being impeded as the knowledge and skills are not always sequentially planned with each year building on previous learning. An example of this during the inspection was that the

same learning about the paschal candle was repeated in various year groups. Leaders have already introduced the use of 'The Big Question' to be able to baseline knowledge at the beginning of a unit and to measure progress at the end.

Governors have attended National School of Formation training as part of their own development as Catholic representatives of the bishop and governors are able to articulate their role and understand the importance of religious education within the school. Leaders and governors ensure that religious education in terms of resourcing, timetabling and staffing is comparable to the other core subjects in the school. Investment in training, supporting subject knowledge and good pedagogical approaches needs to continue in order for the quality of teaching and learning in religious education to be good throughout the school. Early career teachers have been supported well in religious education teaching and in the wider Catholic life of the school. The impact of this is evident in the progress their children make. The subject leader for religious education has a clear vision for the subject and the knowledge to take this forward. For continued improvement to be supported, self-evaluation needs to become a greater and sharper focus for the leadership team and governing body. Outcomes from the self-evaluation should then be used to inform and track key priorities within the religious education improvement plan.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

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

Prayer and liturgy are central to school life, and praying together is part of the daily experience for all pupils and staff. Pupils' attitudes towards collective worship are reverent and positive and they engage well and are respectful. For example, in a liturgy reflecting on the Good Shepherd, pupils gave thoughtful responses to the reading, explaining how they can care and show compassion for each other. They can describe key parts of the Church's year, such as Advent and Lent and how the school celebrates these. They are familiar with scripture and some of the symbols of the Church; older pupils spoke confidently about Jesus, the Lamb of God and Light of the World. Pupils are also starting to articulate how these prayer experiences lead to action, for example when they are given a 'Monday Mission' based on scripture, such as sharing with others. For improvement to continue pupils need to be given opportunities to reflect on their experience of prayer.

A pattern of prayer during the day is embedded throughout the school, meaning pupils recognise and value the importance of prayer as the opportunity to talk to God. There is a growing range of opportunities for pupils and staff to experience different ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition. For example, during the month of May, pupils reverently take part in a procession and service to honour Our Lady, which includes saying and singing traditional prayers and crowning a statue of Our Lady in the school grounds. The role of the chaplaincy ambassadors is developing and they are now starting to lead worship in the school, as well as setting up prayer tables for school worship. A range of prayer spaces is available for pupils, with attractive class prayer focal points. Pupils spoke enthusiastically of how they are starting to use these for spontaneous prayer, such as when they are feeling sad or anxious. All of the staff are committed to the prayer and liturgical life of the school and are good role

models for the pupils. They create a calm, prayerful atmosphere using various forms of prayer by using calming music, appropriate art work and candles as focal points. Staff should consider how to enhance the sense of awe and wonder as part of these acts of worship. The school has developed stronger links with the parish and pupils attend and contribute to the parish Mass on Sundays, as well as welcoming a growing number of parents and parishioners to the regular Masses at school.

Leaders ensure that the school's prayer and liturgy are strategically planned through a termly and yearly calendar linked to the liturgical year. This ensures that key moments of the Church's year are appropriately celebrated, such as the recent whole school Mass for Ash Wednesday. Leaders, including governors, recognise the importance of prayer and liturgy and allocate resources accordingly, such as the new prayer tables and prayer resources which have been purchased. The executive headteacher has supported staff in planning worship; with the result that prayer and liturgy seen during the inspection was of a good standard. However, staff and pupils need to be given more opportunity to take ownership and plan, deliver and evaluate their worship. Leaders need to develop a strategy to build up pupils' involvement as they progress through the school.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	118195
Full postal address of the school	2 Ampthill Road, Ryde, PO33 1LJ
School phone number	01983 562000
Name of head teacher or principal	Margaret Sanderson
Chair of governing board	Rod Hodgson and Alex Pettitt
School Website	https://www.stmaryspri.co.uk/
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	2 -11
Trustees	Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Louise Buxton

Lead inspector

Michael Lobo

Team inspector

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