



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for
St Mary's Catholic Academy

URN: 138725

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham on:

Date: 16-17 February 2023

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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	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- Pupils' passion and commitment to Catholic Social Teaching and the dignity of the human person are outstanding.
- The behaviour of all pupils is exemplary in and around the school.
- Strategic planning, identifying opportunities for liturgy, celebrating feast days, fundraising opportunities, and collaborating with other schools across the multi-academy company (MAC) are outstanding and strongly influence the Catholic life and mission of the school.
- Leadership is of a high standard, demonstrating a commitment to being a positive role model based on the teachings of Jesus.

- Staff are committed to ensuring the very best for all pupils through the mission of the school, based on the faith-filled example of St Mary.

What the school needs to improve:

- Improve pupils' understanding of what they learn from the Gospels and how this influences their choices.
- Ensure consistency in the provision of religious education for all pupils.
- Evaluate relationship, sex, and health education (RSHE) and share findings with stakeholders.

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

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

1

Provision

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

1

Leadership

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

1



Pupils are passionate about the Catholic identity of St Mary's, and many are proactively committed to driving their school's Catholic life and mission. The young disciples, now an established and impactful group, are proud of their role. They celebrate their positive Christ-inspired actions for the school and the wider world. These young disciples can clearly articulate how they follow in Jesus' footsteps, evidenced in their playground actions. Pupils support each other and find ways for all to cooperate, promoting human dignity. Catholic Social Teaching is discussed confidently and eloquently by pupils; their response to Pope Francis' call is evidenced through various practical activities, including gardening within the St Francis Crew, making bird feeders, writing to government ministers, and collecting for local food banks. Pupils proudly talk about their Live Simply award and how they protect God's creation. The young disciples work alongside the established St Francis Crew, Mini-Vinnies, and the Diana award anti-bullying ambassadors, resulting in confident young leaders. Pupils talk confidently about their class saints and how these saints' actions make them excellent role models. Pupils passionately share that the saints had different creative gifts, just like each of us, and that they are inspirational in their decision-making.

Pupils speak confidently about the mission statement and how it influences them. This is reflected in the wide variety of fundraising activities, which the pupils are passionate about; they always have the dignity of the human person in their hearts. Pupils feel confident in approaching leaders with fundraising ideas; most recently, they instigated a non-uniform fundraising day for the victims of the earthquakes in Turkey. The welcome and nurture extended to all stakeholders are clear - this is evidenced in staff interviews, parent surveys and

feedback from pupils who have recently joined the school, the outcome being that every member of the school community feels valued. A robust induction programme for new staff makes them feel appreciated, reflected in the excellent mentor support. Chaplaincy provision is outstanding; the school liaise closely with the parish priest and lay chaplain, ensuring pupils, families, and staff know they can access high-quality spiritual and moral support. The faith-based Kenelm Youth Trust programme, *Quo Vadis: Where are you going?*, has improved resilience for pupils experiencing challenging times. The use of prayer ribbons is an outward sign to the local community sharing the importance of the school's mission and identity. Relationships and health education (RHE) provision is well-planned and meets diocesan requirements.

An informative website rooted in the Catholic faith keeps stakeholders updated on Catholic life and mission. Videos from pupils, audio messages from the parish priest, and home liturgy support packs demonstrate a flourishing partnership between the school and the parish. The previously identified development area to improve pupils' understanding of vocation is now a strength. Staff feel supported by the well-being policy, making them feel deeply valued and cared for. 'People really matter' is evidenced by governors' financial investment into Catholic life and mission and high-quality staff formation and training to develop adults' and pupils' understanding of the mission. The principal is an inspirational witness, who pupils say is very approachable and responsive to their feedback. School leaders and the lay chaplain work hard to ensure the pupils can steer the spiritual direction of the school; this is evidenced through their monitoring and feedback, which has resulted in positive changes in the delivery of the Gospel assembly, for example.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

1



Pupil responses in lessons show they are engaged in religious education and passionate about their learning, resulting in exemplary behaviour in lessons. Pupils show respect towards peers and adults alike; as a result, school is a safe learning environment where pupils develop secure knowledge and understanding. When challenged about their learning and what could be improved, one pupil responded, 'Our school is perfect to be in because of all the exceptional teachers, staff, and friends' a peer added: 'Our lessons are amazing, you get to do lots of fun things'. This evident enjoyment of religious education is reflected in pupils' exercise books, which show a variety of tasks. Pupils understand and appreciate feedback from staff, though only some pupils can articulate the next steps in their learning. With skilled prompting from staff in lessons, pupils can say how religious education helps them to be like Jesus in their choices in and outside of school. Pupils' work, data analysis, and pupil and staff interviews reflect work of a good standard, school monitoring has identified the next steps for improvement, and support is in place.

Various working styles are commonplace in lessons, and teachers use these to enable pupils to collaborate positively with others. Challenge questioning and use of resources, including technology and religious art, reflect teachers' excellent subject knowledge. A culture of staff willingly supporting each other and sharing best practices is evident; this fulfils the MAC motto of 'Better together'. An established culture of linking religious education lessons to scripture and exploring how it impacts daily life is evident across all year groups. However, it is yet to be developed to ensure pupil understanding is strong and they can verbalise it independently. Careful tracking of data and pupil needs results in well-allocated support which has positively impacted the outcomes for all pupils. Support staff have been fully involved in religious education training. Training has resulted in teachers and TAs asking appropriately-pitched questions, resulting in pupils who are confident in their responses; consequently, pupils demonstrate good recall of Gospel stories and are beginning

to understand how this influences their lives in modern Britain. Competent assessment and questioning results in engaging lessons well-matched to most pupils' needs.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum is faithfully delivered. Robust monitoring has resulted in a high-quality culture of coaching being introduced. This is welcomed by staff, who feel empowered in their professional development to make measurable improvements in pupil outcomes for religious education, including increased numbers of pupils working above age-expected levels. Research-based delivery, centred on the Rosenshine teaching principles, has resulted in pupils knowing more and remembering more; the impact of which is reflected in key learning being embedded across year groups. The subject leader has led a strong coaching model, with all staff observing her teach; furthermore, this is developed with team teaching and observations, resulting in staff challenging themselves to think deeply, ensuring this skill is also emerging among the pupils they teach. Based on searching, evaluation and monitoring, implementation plans are used as working documents with teachers, governors, and academy directors to promote best practices in religious education. This results in improved data trends with all groups, including those with higher prior attainment. Analysis of pupil data has resulted in changes in the delivery of the subject to further engage underperforming groups. Staff, governors, and directors are fully involved in detailed monitoring, quality assurance and moderation of pupils' religious education work, which ensures standards are good. Leaders know the improvements needed for the next steps and are well-placed to implement these.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

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

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

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

1

Pupils' deep engagement with prayer, singing and responses demonstrates an embedded tradition of powerful liturgy. One pupil shared, 'I was worried about something at home the other day, and I knew to put on some gentle music and talk to God.' Pupils of all ages take great pride in collaboratively planning and delivering opportunities for liturgy for their peers, resulting in excellent focus and concentration in active prayer times and silent moments. Staff facilitate this expertly, resulting in all pupils being fully and consciously engaged. Prayer opportunities promote a sense of calm among pupils, making them feel confident to share thoughts, concerns, and celebrations. Pupils are supported in their understanding of traditional prayers and the importance of having personal conversations with God. As a result, pupils readily display confidence in articulating the importance of prayer in their lives. Pupils actively evaluate liturgy across the school, inspiring peer and adult delivery change. Pupils delight in writing reflective and personal prayers used in class, whole school liturgy and celebrating the Eucharist.

Staff are highly skilled, confident role models, sharing their faith and knowledge to enhance prayer and liturgy further. Parents recognise staff as outstanding moral compasses. 'Go Forth' tasks support pupils' understanding of demonstrating gospel virtues in their lives; this is enriched through prayer ribbons and displays. Opportunities for parents to join the celebration of prayer with children are regular and thoughtfully planned. The strong personal faith of the principal, leadership team and chaplain ensures they are all outstanding role models for school prayer life; they lead by example, ensuring all staff are confident to support and nurture prayer life in school. As a result of celebrating the liturgical year, pupils are confident in articulating the various seasons. Parishioners are welcome to join liturgy celebrations in school and share how valuable this is, resulting in the whole community having the opportunity to worship together. The chaplain provides ongoing staff support; this includes modelling sessions, team delivery and support in planning.

The policy for prayer and liturgy is shared with parents via the school website and is regularly reviewed. Leaders nurture the liturgical formation of pupils, leading to pupils taking a proactive role in planning whole school worship for their peers. A strategic plan for opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist and key feast days is in place. Clear strategic plans for sacramental preparation and liturgy across all schools in the academy provide regular and high-quality worship experiences. Governors and directors are actively involved in monitoring and feedback, demonstrating the high priority they place on developing prayer and liturgy. Governors regularly attend whole school worship, ensuring they accurately understand the impact of the school's high-quality provision. Leaders' developed understanding of pupils' skills relating to prayer is demonstrated by pupils' development constantly evolving and improving as they progress through the school. Generous budget allocations further indicate the high importance placed on liturgy by governors and directors, reflected in high-quality resources, including the engagement of the lay chaplain. Leaders have invested in excellent training on liturgy, evidenced by the high levels of competence demonstrated by the staff. Leaders are committed to ensuring monitoring is clear, and that evaluation includes the next steps and the anticipated impact these have. This results in accurate self-evaluation and provides meaningful and spiritual experiences for staff, pupils, and parents. A clear timetable of support is in place for staff formation, which is extended to parents and sponsors as part of Confirmation preparation, a strategy that parents highly value.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	138725
Full postal address of the school	Cruso Street, Leek, ST13 8BW
School phone number	01538 493888
Name of head teacher or principal	Gemma Turner
Chair of governing board	Kenneth Wilson
School Website	www.st-marys-leek.staffs.sch.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Painsley Catholic Academy
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Julie-Anne Tallon	Lead inspector
Deborah Enstone	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