



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection Report

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Manor House Road, Wednesbury, West Midlands, WS10 9PN

Inspection dates :

19th – 20th June 2019

Lead Inspector:

Mary Daniels

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:

Good

Catholic Life:

Outstanding

Religious Education:

Good

Collective Worship:

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection:

Good

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

This is a Good Catholic school because:

- There is a strong sense of community at all levels which is evident in the high quality of relationships between staff, pupils, parents and parish.
- Teachers consistently plan good Religious Education lessons which enthuse and excite pupils.
- Pupils act with reverence and are keen to participate in Collective Worship.
- The school's leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education and leads by example.

It is not yet Outstanding because:

- Pupils do not regularly take part in evaluating the Catholic Life of the school.
- Religious Education lessons do not always provide sufficient challenge for pupils of all abilities.
- Pupils in some year groups do not have the opportunity to plan and lead Collective Worship.

FULL REPORT

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Involve pupils in evaluating the Catholic Life of the school.
- Plan Religious Education lessons that provide greater challenge for all abilities. Use the close analyse of assessment data to inform teachers' planning.
- Develop the pupils' role in leading and planning Collective Worship.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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

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

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

- Most pupils appreciate, value and actively participate in the Catholic Life and mission of the school, 'Our Community, growing and learning together with Christ'. They are enthusiastic members of numerous groups, which include sports' leaders, library leaders, school council, head boy and head girl.
- Staff are excellent role models and contribute to the development of the Catholic Life of the school and its mission through promoting high standards of behaviour. Relationships between all members of the school community are of the highest quality. They are a happy and cohesive team and they give their time freely; attending parish masses, retreats and organising activities for pupils during lunchtime.
- Pupils know what it is to be part of a Catholic school. In discussions they commented that St Mary's, "Helps us grow closer to God," and that they, "Are all part of God's family".
- Pupils have some opportunity to evaluate the Catholic Life through pupil questionnaires and the school council. There is now a newly formed Mini-Vinnies group, which is beginning to evaluate Catholic Life in more depth.
- There is a strong Catholic ethos across the school and the school has very good links with the parish. There is an active parish group that meets regularly in the school. Members of the parish lead the Rosary in class during October and May and train altar servers.
- The new parish priest is contributing to the strong partnership between school and parish. He appreciated the warmth of his welcome from the headteacher, staff and pupils when he joined the parish. He has a good, close working relationship with the headteacher, who is also a member of the parish. He said that the Catholic ethos of the school is definitely strong, and all pupils are involved in it. He believes pupils, "Display a devotion and attentiveness which is uplifting".

- The recently formed liturgy group and monthly parish family Mass forms a bridge between school and parish and attendance at this Mass is good. Several members of the governing body are actively involved in this group.
- The behaviour of pupils is excellent and the headteacher believes that the pupils are the strength of the school. The use of a reflection room, where pupils are encouraged to think about their behaviour and reflect on their actions, helps pupils to understand how to forgive and be forgiven. Pupils show a deep respect for themselves and others.
- Catholic Schools Pupil Profile (CSPP) is evident throughout the school. Current values are displayed on classroom prayer areas, shared with parents through the website and 'Present and Praise' assemblies.
- Fundraising at the school supports a variety of charities, including the Good Shepherd Appeal, CAFOD and 'Smile for Joel' (a charity that was set up in remembrance of a past pupil who was tragically killed). This work has meant that pupils are aware of the needs of others and seek justice for all.
- Pupils know that vocation is being aware of the call of God in their lives. This knowledge is fostered through the presence of the parish priest, vocations team and a whole school vocation's day.
- All pupils are involved in the Catholic Life of school, irrespective of their faith commitment, and there is a deep appreciation of other faiths. This is developed through an annual focused week when each class studies a different faith. This work is then shared with the whole school community.
- The school environment reflects its mission and identity. The mission statement is displayed in the entrance hall and there are many varied displays across the school, including displays of class saints outside each classroom and prayer stops along the corridor, which promote the Catholic faith.
- The curriculum reflects commitment to Catholic social teaching and the school provides many opportunities for moral and spiritual development. For example, the Eco Bus visits the school and pupils have the opportunity to discuss reducing waste, recycling and caring for the environment.
- Regular retreats to Alton Castle are organised for staff and pupils.
- The school is truly inclusive and pastoral support is a strength of the school. The highest possible care for the most vulnerable pupils is evident throughout the school. Support staff are well trained and there is excellent support for pupils with additional needs. Workshops are organised regularly to support pupils with additional needs. As a result, all pupils are happy and confident.
- The school is very alert to the pastoral needs of staff and systems are in place to provide care and support for them. The school has achieved the Sandwell Wellbeing Charter Mark. This is awarded to schools that demonstrate a whole school approach to emotional health and wellbeing.
- Parents are very positive about the school commenting on the, "Close community and family feel" of the school and how, "Good behaviour is expected from everyone". All parents agree that St Mary's is a good school and their pupils are very happy there.
- Almost all pupils value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and its links with the parish. The school is very proud of their parish church, St Mary's on the Hill, which is 150 years old. There is a deep appreciation of the tradition and history of the parish. The designs of the stain glass windows in the church are replicated in the school hall.

- Pupils have a good understanding of loving relationships. The school has adopted the diocesan Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) policy and follows 'A Journey in Love' programme. Parents have recently been consulted on the teaching of RSE in school and all their responses have been very positive.

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

- The school's leadership is deeply committed to the school and gives the highest possible priority to Catholic Life. Governors comment that Catholic Life is fundamental to the life of the school and they see their role as maintaining the ethos and character of the school.
- Leaders have a school vision until 2024, in which Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship are at the core.
- Over the years, recruitment to the school has been a challenge and governors have worked hard to uphold the Catholic ethos. The present headteacher, who has been at the school for almost four years and after a period of high staff turnover, has created a strong and supportive team. The school is now in a period of stability with an excellent leadership team.
- Governors are highly appreciative of the head and feel that, "He is a great example and wants the very best for the school".
- The provision for the Catholic Life of the school is given the highest possible priority by leaders who ensure there are rigorous monitoring processes in place to identify areas for improvement. There is a schedule for monitoring Catholic Life and this leads directly into the school development plan.
- Governors believe that self-evaluation is key to school improvement and have completed the Catholic Education Service (CES) self-evaluation tool. Areas identified for improvement have been added to the school development plan.
- Governors work with senior leaders to monitor provision and were involved in the writing of the current self-evaluation document for Catholic Life (SEF). There are two link governors who regularly monitor Catholic Life.
- Professional development is well planned and organised frequently for staff. This involves a variety of training opportunities, which include Diocesan courses and training delivered in school by senior leaders.
- The school is very successful in engaging with parents and carers, especially those who find working with school difficult. A variety of opportunities are provided for parents to be involved with the school. These include workshops to support parents of pupils with additional needs.
- Governors make a highly significant contribution to the Catholic Life of the school. They are part of the wider parish and the headteacher values their support, experience and challenge. They have a wide range of skills, which are used to support the mission of the school. The Chair is a National Leader of Governance and shares his expertise with other schools.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

- Most pupils make good progress in each key stage. Pupils enter the school below expected standards and make rapid progress in early years. At the end of key stage 1 these standards have been maintained. Progress in key stage 2 is good with the majority of pupils reaching expected levels.
- Almost all groups of pupils make good progress. More rigorous analysis of assessment data would benefit all groups and improve their progress over time.
- Most pupils are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Pupils can apply the skills, knowledge and understanding from their Religious Education lessons into the world around them. When considering moral and social issues, pupils use their work in Religious Education to inform the choices they make. This is reinforced through the charities they support and the use of the Reflection Room, which encourages them to think deeply about their behaviour and feelings.
- Pupils are engaged in lessons and concentrate well, where behaviour is excellent. Any disruption is unusual and in some classes pupils' needs are met with support from well directed teaching assistants.
- Pupils are very positive and enthusiastic about their Religious Education lessons. They comment that their lessons are always interesting, and they learn about Jesus and how to follow his example in their own lives.
- Pupils' attainment and current work is good and in line with other core subjects. Work in books demonstrates a wide range of activities including drama, art, music, written tasks and prayer.
- Teaching is good and there is some outstanding practice. Lessons are well planned using the 'Learning and Growing as People of God' curriculum strategy. Staff are committed to improving their practice. They are willing to work collaboratively and share ideas. They are confident to ask for support to develop their subject knowledge.
- During the inspection, a Year 6 lesson explored belonging to a parish community, the teacher invited a long-standing parishioner and governor to outline the history of the parish. This was very powerful and elicited some thought provoking questions from pupils.
- In a lesson observed by an inspector, the Year 2 teacher used technology creatively to make the learning purposeful and relevant. The pupils used tablets to look at St Mary's parish church website, which showed the interior of the church. They worked in pairs to explore the symbols they found. Pupils were very engaged and made very clear progress.
- Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge. They use this knowledge well to question pupils and extend their thinking. This was particularly evident in a Year 4 lesson. Questions included, "What do you think would have happened if the

apostles had not told anyone about the Resurrection of Jesus?" and "How would the world be different today?"

- Staff use resources well to plan star tasks. These ensure pupils further develop their learning and understanding, especially in their learning from Religious Education and how it applies to their own lives (AT2).
- Most pupils are involved in evaluating how well they are doing in Religious Education. Teachers closely match activities to the experiences and knowledge of the pupils using the diocesan Unit Markers.
- The classroom environment is good. There are bright and interesting displays in all classrooms, depicting the liturgical season. The prayer space is the focal point of the room and every class has a display of the virtues promoted in the CSPP.
- Achievement and effort are often celebrated within class using a 'Class DoJo' system of positive reinforcement and encouragement and at 'Present and Praise' achievement assemblies.

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

- Leaders and governors ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishop's conference and is taught for the correct amount of time. It is comparable to other core subjects.
- Religious Education is part of the appraisal cycle for staff.
- Religious Education follows a cycle of monitoring and evaluation, which includes lesson observations, book trawls and pupil interviews. Religious Education books are monitored regularly and there is some moderation of work and analysis of data across the school. This self-evaluation of the subject identifies its strengths and areas for development.
- Link governors have compared Religious Education and English books. They commented on the high quality of work in Religious Education books and the huge improvement over time.
- The subject leader for Religious Education has a clear vision for the teaching and learning of Religious Education and a good level of expertise. She leads by example and has provided training and support for teachers, so that all teaching in Religious Education is at least consistently good with outstanding elements in all classes. The Religious Education subject leader works alongside less experienced teachers to ensure planning meets expectations. She is well supported by the headteacher who is always receptive of new ideas and senior leaders work as a team.
- She attends training regularly and cascades information to all staff. She has introduced many new initiatives to improve teaching and learning; encouraging the use of thinking skills and active learning strategies. She is rightly proud that practice in the teaching of Religious Education has improved over the past four years. This has resulted in a corresponding improvement in attainment across the school.
- Leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education meets the needs of different groups of pupils. Resources are made available to support all pupils.
- Standards in Religious Education are reported to governors in meetings and headteacher reports. Link governors meet with senior leaders regularly.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.

- Collective Worship is central to the life of the school and praying together is part of the daily experience for pupils and staff, whatever their own faith background.
- All pupils act with reverence and are keen to be involved in acts of Collective Worship. They sing joyfully and join in responses with confidence. The use of signing 'God bless you' at the beginning of worship reminds pupils that they have all joined together to listen to the Word of God.
- Pupils are beginning to plan and lead prayer and Collective Worship and they regularly write the bidding prayers for Mass. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils planned and led a class Collective Worship. They focused on the Sacrament of Confirmation and how they can share the gifts of the Holy Spirit with each other. The worship was calm and reverent, and pupils were clearly engaged by the worship planned by their peers.
- Pupils have prayer partners. Older pupils are partnered with younger ones and act as role models supporting them during Mass.
- Pupils have a secure knowledge of traditional prayers, especially the responses in Mass. This has been developed through 'Oremus', during which pupils join together to pray, and the use of a school prayer book in every class.
- Pupils have the opportunity to write their own prayers in Religious Education lessons and record them in their books. After Mass, pupils complete an evaluation and also write a prayer reflecting on the theme of the Mass.
- Prayer bags are sent home in every class and parents have the opportunity to write prayers with their children.
- When they pray, pupils explained that they, "Get closer to God through prayer" and "Speak to Jesus in my own words".
- Chaplaincy provision by the parish priest is strong. He wants the pupils to understand that liturgy is sacred and a very special experience for everyone.
- Spiritual welfare of pupils is given a high profile in the school with retreats for pupils and staff. Parents also have the opportunity during Lent to attend workshops.
- Pupils are able to share Collective Worship and prayer with other school communities. They attend the Good Shepherd Mass every year.
- Collective Worship is given a high priority in terms of planning, evaluating and resourcing. It is timetabled daily and there are regular Masses held in school and the parish church. There is a Gospel assembly every Wednesday.
- Collective Worship has a clear purpose, message and direction. The themes chosen for worship reflect a good understanding of the liturgical seasons. For example, during the inspection, the headteacher and deputy headteacher led worship on Corpus Christi based on the Wednesday Word.
- Sacramental preparation is led by the school with support from the parish priest. It is well planned and attendance by parents is good. The parish priest visits

sacramental classes regularly to support the teacher and ensure pupils' understanding is sound.

- Relevant staff have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year and ensure pupils are familiar with the liturgical year and have good experiences of the Church's liturgical life.
- Collective Worship has a positive impact on the parents and families who are invited to all school Masses, celebration assemblies and liturgies throughout the year. Parents respond very positively to these opportunities.

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

- Collective Worship is well organised and planned by the headteacher and Religious Education subject lead. It has a clear message and purpose. Themes for Masses and assemblies reflect the liturgical calendar to ensure pupils have a good understanding of the liturgical year, seasons and feasts.
- Monitoring of Collective Worship is part of the overall monitoring and evaluation schedule of the school. Link governors are involved in the monitoring process and the evaluation of Collective Worship is shared regularly at governor meetings and meetings with senior leaders.
- School leaders elicit the views of parents and visitors after attending Collective Worship. Their response is always positive.
- Governors visit the school regularly and share in celebrations and Masses with the pupils and staff.
- The parish priest works closely with the headteacher and Religious Education subject leader to promote and evaluate the quality of Collective Worship. As a result of their ongoing discussions, some weekly school Masses are being held in the school hall. This helps strengthen links with the parish as parishioners are invited to attend Mass in school.
- Leaders know how to plan and deliver quality Collective Worship that all pupils can access. Staff are excellent role models and guide and support pupils during Collective Worship.
- There is a high priority placed on the professional development of staff including liturgical formation and planning for Collective Worship. Most recently training was organised on the purpose of Collective Worship and the wide variety and styles of prayer. This increased staff confidence in teaching pupils to plan and lead prayer and worship.
- Formal monitoring of Collective Worship is carried out by senior leaders and the link governors.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Unique reference number	103993
Local authority	Sandwell
This inspection was carried out under canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the 2005 Education Act.	
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	245 (including Nursery)
Appropriate authority	Governing Body
Chair	Paul Piddock
Headteacher	Gary Linford
Telephone number	0121 505 3595
Website address	www.stmaryswednesbury.co.uk
Email address	headteacher@st-marys.sandwell.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 th -9 th July 2014

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a one form entry school. It serves the parish of St Mary's, Wednesbury.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 50%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is line with the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is above the national average.
- Attainment on entry is in line with national expectations.
- Since the last inspection there have been a number of significant changes in staffing. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2015 and there is a new Religious Education subject leader. Five of the current eight class teachers have been appointed since the previous inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors – Mary Daniels and Rachel Girling.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspectors observed teaching across seven Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with the governors which included the chair of governors, Religious Education link governors, the parish priest, the headteacher and the Religious Education subject leader
- The inspectors attended a whole school Mass, observed class Collective Worship and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, the Religious Education action plan and teachers' planning.