



St. Mary's Junior School, Newton-le-Willows

URN: 104816

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Malcolm McMahon, OP, Archbishop of Liverpool:

Date: 20th/21st September 2023

Overall effectiveness

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

2

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.....

2

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 fully to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

✓

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- The commitment, care and support from the head of school, chair of governors and current interim executive head, ensures that the mission statement is alive within the school community.
- The subject leader is an inspiration and is the driving-force in keeping all aspects of religious education at the forefront of the school, despite the challenges the school has faced.
- Pupils are building up a rich religious literacy and are confident in referring to scripture they have studied previously and are able to demonstrate how this can be lived out in their daily lives.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and consistency within lessons means that good standards of religious education have remained at the heart of the school. This is reflected in the childrens' books and their responses in lessons.
- The children are proud of their school community and feel safe and happy.

What the school needs to improve

- To give pupils time to reflect and deepen their responses in religious education lesson through skillful teacher questioning.
- To establish a variety of ways to record and celebrate the 'respond' part of the Come and See scheme.
- To encourage more pupils in the development of prayer spaces in and around the school.

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

1

Leadership

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

2

Pupils know the mission statement: 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me' of which they are proud. They know the practical ways in which it can support them and others in their daily lives. This was verbalised by a child who said, 'We live it out by showing compassion and resilience.' The recently-revised behaviour policy, which puts Christ at centre, helps children to have a sense of belonging and to feel safe, happy and secure. Pupils stated that the new behaviour policy made everyone follow the rules and makes school a better place to be. Observed behaviour in lessons and in and around the school was good. The pupils are given opportunities to respond to Catholic social teaching through fundraising for Cafod, Good Shepherd and local charities such as 'Our Warm Welcome,' supporting refugees in practical ways to the community. The school offers opportunities to learn about and understand other faiths. They support and celebrate significant events in other faith journeys, which is appreciated by those children and their families. The school values of respect, compassion, and resilience are known and central to the life of the school.

The school's mission statement is deeply-embedded in the school community. The mission statement has had a significant impact on the school's journey over the past few years. It has enabled the word of God to be a source of encouragement for all and always at the heart of life at St Mary's. All stakeholders are immensely proud of the school and, despite some difficult times, support and care for each other has remained constant and deeply rooted in a tangible Catholic ethos. The school has invested in highly-effective pastoral support to meet the needs of both parents and children, which reflects the school values, particularly compassion to all. There is a

strong culture of welcome where staff and children go the extra mile to ensure that everyone is supported and valued. Staff are very positive role models; they seek to embody the values at the heart of the mission statement. The school environment reflects the mission statement and the children have a vision of how they would like the school to look in the future. The school's provision for relationships and sex education meets both statutory and diocesan requirements and is faithful to the teaching of the church. This is achieved through the Journey in Love programme.

The school's recently introduced and personalised 'Arches' curriculum supports the school's mission statement. It has been designed to develop a broad, balanced and challenging education that is rooted in the Catholic faith and puts Christ at the heart of all subject areas. The dedicated and passionate subject leader has strong links with the Liverpool Archdiocese in sharing good practice within her own school and beyond. Parents are welcomed into the school for education 'Pick up and Pray'. Although this is a recent initiative, feedback from parents has been positive in understanding the prayer focus of the week and taking that forward at home. The school is committed to implementing Catholic social teaching, demonstrating a commitment to care for our common home and helping others through social action. Leaders and Governors are fully-committed to the physical and mental wellbeing of the staff. All staff expressed that they belong to a loving and supportive school family. Governors are involved in the school self-evaluation and, as a result, they fully understand and support the journey the school is currently on. Staff training takes place both in school and externally; staff appreciate the support and guidance given by the religious education lead. A non-Catholic member of staff expressed that they had grown and learnt so much being part of this school.

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.....

2

Pupils work well to do more and remember more during individual lessons, meaning most pupils progress well. The recently-introduced retrieval practice at the start of each lesson has strengthened the children's long-term memory. This was evident in all observed lessons when children demonstrated a good knowledge of prior learning. Knowledge organisers are used by all to further strengthen the children's understanding. Pupils are given the opportunity to unpick scripture in a variety of different ways. As a result, they are building up a rich religious literacy and are confident in referring to scripture they have studied previously. Pupils are able to demonstrate how lessons learnt from scripture can be lived out in their daily lives. The whole school approach to understanding new vocabulary is used effectively within religious education lessons. All books are well-presented and their responses are recorded in a variety of creative ways. As a result, the children take pride in their books and expressed how much they enjoy their 'fun' religious education lessons. As staff understanding of year group expectations increase, this will strengthen pupils' understanding of their next steps.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good and there is consistent teaching across all year groups. The school has worked hard on the structure of lessons across all subjects, including religious education. The vocabulary initiative, where children define a word and then use it in context, gives pupils the confidence to use the correct religious vocabulary in their responses. You could almost see confidence growing when children were successful. Teachers put religious education lessons at the heart of the school day, which is reflected in the children's books and the responses within lessons. Teachers plan in pairs which ensures that all children are receiving good quality religious education lessons across all year groups. They plan lessons carefully, adapting their teaching when needed to ensure that all pupils are included. Teaching assistants support children in this adaptive approach.

Teachers use a variety of creative ways in which to teach. The 'silent dice' questioning technique is a very successful way of ensuring all children are engaged in discussion. Teachers' questioning is effective in most lessons and pupils respond appropriately. However, some questions lack challenge and opportunities are missed to deepen the children's knowledge and understanding and therefore produce a greater depth response. Pupils' work and responses are celebrated in all classes and they feel their contributions are valued.

Leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum is faithful to the *Religious Education Directory* and it meets the Archdiocesan requirements. They work hard to ensure that religious education is in line with other curriculum areas and there is parity within the school's 'Arches Curriculum'. Leaders are striving to validate the accuracy of their assessments through moderation within school, and the subject leader strengthens this through her work with other Catholic schools. The school's reports to parents highlights the academic progress for Religious Education by using a colour-coding system. This is in line with the other core subjects, with Religious Education being first. The subject leader has a clear vision for the development of the provision and outcomes of religious education and is effectively supported by senior leaders in her desire to drive forward the progress of the team. She is an excellent role model for teaching and learning in religious education and highly effective in the support she offers to the rest of the team. Governors, particularly the dedicated Religious Education Governor, are involved strategically in self-evaluation, meaning governors are clear on the strengths of the school and how to move the school forward. This is achieved through the Religious Education subject leader's termly report to governors, which includes an overview, assessment update, any professional development that has taken place and progress towards the key priorities.

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

Pupils enjoy and respond well to the experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school. They engage in prayer and liturgy with respect. They can reflect in silence and join in responses confidently. They particularly participate with enthusiasm when singing! The hymn strengthened the message they had received in the chosen Gospel. There is a variety of worship available to pupils. The phase prayer time began by reminding children about the liturgical year and at what stage we are at. The Worship Warriors are eager to participate in preparing the focus areas, reading scripture and setting the example to the other children, although they would like to take on more responsibility. Through the theme from the Gospel for this week, pupils are able to understand the importance of forgiveness and how this can be lived out in school and in the wider community. This message was also shared with a group of Year five parents at 'Pick up and Pray', who fed back how much they enjoyed the experience. The four stages of gather, listen, respond and go forth, are explicit in all acts of prayer and contribute to pupils understanding the structure of liturgy. Go forth activities form part of the school's Prayer Hub and class focus areas, where children can leave comments in the prayer book, for example, of times they have shown kindness or forgiveness.

Traditional prayer is part of everyday life in school, and pupils are able to demonstrate their familiarity with daily prayers, for example the end of the school day prayer. Focus-areas in all classrooms are used well to facilitate prayer such as displaying the traditional prayers of the Church and relevant pieces of scripture for that year group. The weekly whole-school prayer and liturgy is based on the Sunday Gospel and informs the phase and class worships for the forthcoming week. Prayer provided by the school offers pupils a range of ways to pray, which further contributes to their enjoyment. Staff are committed to being good role models at times of prayer. They modelled

signs accurately for example, 'greeting the gospel' and joined in with singing and responses. The prayer hub offers pupils a dedicated area to sit, reflect and offer personal prayer. Music and appropriate, thoughtful videos are used to enhance the prayer experiences for the participants. This was recognised and appreciated in a parent survey. The school and parish community work together to develop the prayer experience offered to the children, for example the Rosary Club and the 'With You Always' programme.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy provides some guidance to support staff in their preparations and delivery of worships. The school plan a yearly calendar for liturgical celebrations, including Mass on holy days obligation and other feasts and memorials. They ensure that the parish priest makes regular visits to school to celebrate Mass with the school community. The school and the parish work together to provide the Sacramental programme, the 'With you Always' coordinator being a regular visitor to the school. Staff who lead prayer and liturgy have engaged in training led by the subject leader, including using the 'Stepping Stones' guidance. Leaders and governors know and understand the different age-appropriate levels of skills and participation in prayer and liturgy and that these skills are built up throughout school; this was evident in the times of prayer observed. The religious education governor attends many times of prayer and liturgy and values being welcomed and included. She is proud of the school's attendance at liturgies in the community, such as on Remembrance Day. Monitoring informs leaders and governors of the successes and the areas for improvement in prayer and liturgy.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St. Mary's Junior School
School unique reference number (URN)	104816
Full postal address of the school	Barn Way Newton-le-Willows Merseyside WA12 9QQ
School phone number	01744 678603
Name of head teacher or principal	Mrs N Follin
Chair of governing board	Vanessa Wells
School Website	www.federationofstmarys.co.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Not applicable
Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	7-11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Liverpool
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	3 rd February 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Mrs Deborah Albon

Lead inspector

Mrs Clare Dwerryhouse

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