



St Mary's Catholic Primary Academy

URN: 148657

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Leeds

25–26 April 2024

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

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

1

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Fully

2

What the school does well

- Staff and governors are passionate about St Mary's school. They work extremely well together and ensure that the Catholic Life and Mission of St Mary's is lived out to the fullest.
- There are extremely effective parish links, and the parish priest is a frequent visitor in school.
- Pupils are given lots of opportunities to reflect spiritually and ethically during religious education lessons.
- Pupils enjoy their learning in religious education and behaviour is excellent.
- Prayer and liturgy is a priority when planning for the school year: pupils, staff, and parents greatly appreciate the prayer life of St Mary's.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve teaching and learning in religious education by giving pupils the knowledge and skills to clearly articulate how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve.
- Explore links with agencies and the wider community to provide enrichment activities that will enhance the religious education curriculum further.
- Develop prayer and liturgy in order that pupils become highly skilled in planning liturgies which are creative and inspirational.

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

Pupil outcomes

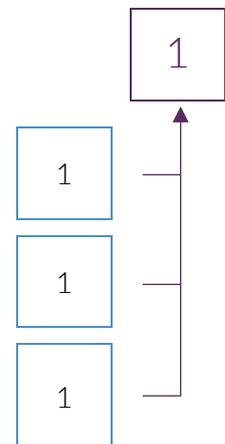
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Pupils are proud to attend St Mary's Catholic Primary School and can discuss the new school mission statement in detail. Following consultation with all stakeholders, pupils fully own the new mission statement, school prayer, and logo: 'We have the cross and Mary at the centre of our logo to remind us Christ is at the centre of all that we do, and we follow Mary's example in how we live.' Pupils show a deep respect for one another. They are proud of the diverse nature of their school. They enjoy learning about other faiths and have respect for people with faith and those that have none. Pupils play a significant role with many opportunities for pupil voice. Pupils have many opportunities to take up leadership roles in school. Mini-Vinnies, Kingdom Kids and Mary's Missionaries each have a distinctive role to play in school and pupils can clearly articulate which area of Catholic Social Teaching inspires their purpose. For example, a member of Mini-Vinnies enthusiastically described how they researched different charities and how they are 'following Jesus' example and loving our neighbour'.

The quality of provision for Catholic life and mission at St Mary's is excellent and staff are strongly committed to the school. The sense of community is extremely joyful, exemplified by a staff comment that 'St Mary's feels like a second home'. Many different stakeholders appreciate the hospitality and how they are made to feel extremely welcome. The school environment is excellent. From first arrival, it is obvious that St Mary's is a Catholic school due to high quality display both inside and out. Pupils and staff are provided with many and varied opportunities to pray and deepen spiritual understanding. Parents talk about the positive impact that this has on family life. Chaplaincy is well planned: the development of the whole person is the shared vision throughout the school, and is given a high priority when organising the life of the school. Chaplaincy is well supported by the highly regarded parish priest who visits school on a regular

basis. School uses *'Life to the full'* to deliver the relationships education curriculum. Leaders consulted with parents and governors several years ago and parents have access to resources on the school website.

Leaders and governors are unrelenting in their promotion of the Catholic Life and mission of St Mary's. They work in partnership with Blessed Peter Snow Trust, the diocese, and local schools. Parish links are outstanding. St Mary's School staff fully support Family Catechises in the parish and the wider deanery by hosting and leading sessions in school for their pupils and those from the wider community. At the time of inspection, an after-school group preparing to receive Holy Communion was in session. The school is highly effective at engaging with parents. Parents understand and strongly support the school's mission and speak very highly of all staff. The school's provision of personal, social, and health education is outstanding. Several resources have been expertly refined to meet the unique requirements of St Mary's school. The team around vulnerable pupils is highly valued and well-resourced by leaders and governors. The induction of new staff is exemplary. The early career teachers in school feel extremely well supported and talk about the open-door culture within the school.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

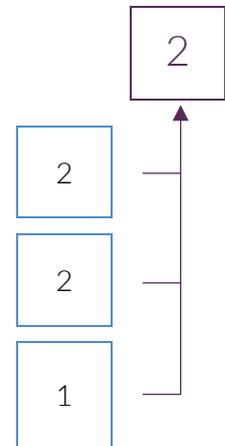
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Pupils' outcomes in religious education are in line with, or above other areas of the curriculum. Progress can be clearly seen during lessons and through looking at books. When previous learning is revisited, pupils show good subject knowledge and use accurate religious vocabulary. Pupils can speak at length when given the opportunity to do so and relate their learning to topics covered earlier in the year. Pupils reflect on the demands of everyday life, describing how their learning in religious education helps them to think about 'how we should live our lives'. Behaviour for learning is particularly good. Most pupils listen attentively and are very keen to ask and answer questions. Pupils talk about religious education lessons positively. However, they do not fully understand how to make further progress. There were few opportunities for self and peer assessment in the lessons observed and the books scrutinised by the inspectors. Pupils of all ages are confident using subject specific language. Work in pupils' books is of a good standard showing they work with pride. Pupils enjoy a range of activities in religious education and show independence when completing suitably differentiated tasks.

Teachers are confident when delivering religious education. Time has been given to plan units of work jointly with the religious education coordinator. In addition, staff can regularly seek advice from the special needs coordinator when designing activities for children with additional needs. All teachers demonstrate a deep level of commitment and high expectations when delivering religious education lessons. Lessons begin with a prayer, a lighted candle and pupils are told they are about to do something special. Teachers' questioning is effective: they encourage pupils to extend answers and ask their own questions. All lessons begin with 'flashback 4' which remind pupils of previous learning. It also gives teachers the opportunity to revisit the school mission statement and the meaning behind the new school logo on a regular basis. Teachers celebrate pupils' efforts in a variety of ways. This regular positive praise

motivates the pupils to work well. Teachers provide feedback within lessons, but the feedback is not always specific enough. This results in pupils not having the vocabulary to identify next steps in their learning.

The quality of leadership in religious education is outstanding. The leadership team work together to ensure that there is consistency in the implementation of policies and strategies. There is an attitude of challenge which is leading to rapid improvement. The time given by the religious education leader and special needs coordinator to improve planning and differentiation is having a significant impact. Leaders invest in staff training, resulting in most teachers having good subject knowledge, delivering lessons in a creative manner. The curriculum design ensures that 10% of time is devoted to religious education. It is considered a core subject by leaders and governors. The school benefits from a highly involved parish priest, who comes into school regularly. He supports staff and pupils with curriculum knowledge and teaches certain topics to the pupils when invited. Staff are confident to ask questions, praising the leadership team for their open manner and support. Leaders and governors are robust in monitoring and evaluating religious education. The recent showcase allowed parents, staff, and governors to examine books and talk to pupils, gaining an understanding of current learning in religious education.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

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

2

Pupils at St Mary's participate extremely well in prayer and liturgy and sing with confidence. The youngest pupils have established good routines. They make the sign of the cross and are beginning to learn traditional prayers and responses from the Mass. Pupils of all ages contribute to class-based worship in an age-appropriate manner. Pupils in upper Key Stage 2 plan in small groups to deliver liturgies based on one of the 'virtues to live by'. The pupils are becoming increasingly confident in leading class-based worships. Pupils use the materials provided by teachers to plan liturgies which clearly follow the four-part structure. These are not yet outstanding because pupils' opportunities for more freedom to plan prayers and responses that are meaningful, allowing for times of prayerful silence, are at an early stage of development. Older pupils talk about the importance of worship time: 'it helps us to change and think carefully about our behaviour'. One child talked about a service on forgiveness. 'It helped me realise I was holding a grudge against another girl in my class, so after the worship I made an effort to make up with her and we both felt better'. Pupils routinely evaluate class-based liturgy and suggest how it can be improved. The pupil chaplaincy team, known as Mary's Missionaries, speak proudly of the impact they have had on the prayer life of the school and the opportunities they have created for voluntary prayer sessions.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the daily life of St Mary's. Pupils and staff have several opportunities throughout the week to join in a variety of prayerful gatherings. Staff choose seasonally appropriate scripture. When selecting twelve virtues to focus on throughout the academic year staff expertly matched these to the liturgical seasons. There is an established routine in school, with each day allocated to a particular resource. Whole school liturgy on Monday is led by the headteacher. The current virtue is explored each Thursday, and this is the focus for pupils' planning and leading their own collective worship. Links with the parish are

extremely strong. Pupils attend Mass fortnightly in the parish church on a rota-basis. The parish priest also celebrates Mass in school for dedicated events and Holy Days. Families appreciate the provision for prayer and liturgy and are eager to attend Mass and other services whenever they are invited. St Mary's benefits from the diocesan music programme, giving pupils the opportunity to learn new hymns and sing well. Staff are very good role models inspiring pupils to participate prayerfully.

Leaders place the highest priority on planning the liturgical year. They ensure that all holy days of obligation and other significant times are celebrated with Mass. Due to the structure of the week, staff and pupils are fully aware of what happens each weekday. Staff have received training in prayer and liturgy. A clear policy has been developed and this is used consistently by staff. There is a clear progression of expectations as pupils move through school. The youngest pupils were observed choosing symbols for the worship table and responding to the teacher with confidence. Secure routines have been established. As the teacher stated, 'Peace be with you' the youngest pupils were confident to respond correctly with, 'And with your spirit'. Older pupils were observed greeting the gospel through words and actions. Upper Key Stage 2 children work together in small groups on a rota basis. They plan liturgies that link to the current virtue being contemplated in school. At the time of inspection this was Resilience, and it was wonderful to observe pupils relating this virtue to their own lives. Teaching staff plan and lead liturgies for one another, ensuring training and monitoring of worship is ongoing and frequently discussed. Leaders and governors regularly review the quality of prayer and liturgy, observing collective worship, and seeking the views of pupils. This robust monitoring is leading to rapid improvement.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148657
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3813308
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Swires Road, Halifax, HX1 2ER
School phone number	01422362365
Headteacher	Jenna Walker
Chair of Local Governing Body	Angela Phillips
School Website	http://www.stmaryshalifax.co.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	8-9 June 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Diane Todd
Laura Wharton

Lead
Team

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