



St Mary's Catholic Primary

URN: 141535

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Most Reverend John Wilson Archbishop of Southwark

20–21 March 2025

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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

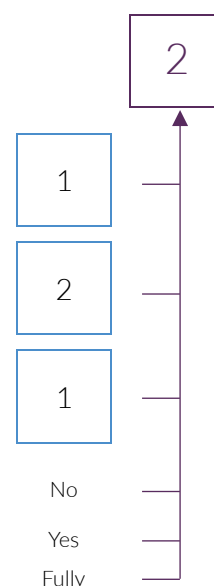
Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

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



Compliance statement

- The school is not compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishop's conference in its timetabled provision of religious education.
- The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school has acted upon the previous areas for improvement ensuring assessment without levels and opportunities for pupil chaplaincy are in place.

What the school does well

- The Catholic life and mission and ethos permeates throughout the school creating a harmonious environment.
- Encourages pupils to be leaders of faith.
- Creates a wide range of opportunities to pray and express faith.
- Religious education has a positive impact on pupils' lives.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure the school is compliant in its delivery of timetabled religious education.
- Incorporate system of forensic self-evaluation at all levels of leadership including governance.
- Deliver opportunities in the learning of religious education which enable every child to be stretched and challenged.

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

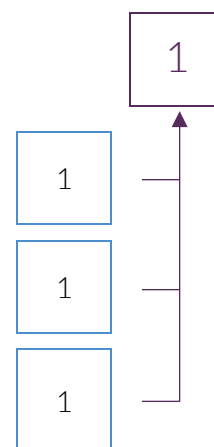
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



At St Mary's there is a unique sense of positivity and purpose. Pupils understand not only liturgical scripture but are able to discuss and live out the Gospel messages in their school life. The care of and for each other, is deeply embedded with a sense of mutual respect in everything and for everyone. This dignity for all significantly enhances the Catholic life and mission of the school. Pupils are keen to take on roles which enable them to live out the Catholic social teaching principles which are rooted in all aspects of the school. This can be seen through the positive work undertaken by the RE Ambassadors, who drive projects, share Jesus' messages, teach about Gospel values and enable the community to act as Jesus taught. In addition, the Mini Vinnies are an active group of Year 5 pupils developing projects across the school, which help others grow in Jesus' love. Pupils value highly being able to support and make a difference to the lives of others; they actively participate in and contribute to opportunities provided by the school. Pupils are actively involved in the local churches, singing annually for the St Vincent de Paul Society Christmas lunch and making Christmas cards for the elderly, which they deliver in person.

The mission and vision of the school, of 'respect and love' and 'mutual respect and tolerance', is at its heart. It significantly impacts on the life of the school and the wider community. Staff actively participate in the Catholic life of the school and embrace the ethos which they readily implement. Staff are exemplary role models for pupils, resulting in a calm supportive environment where pupil behaviour is nothing less than exemplary. Catholic social teaching forms the basis for a deep respect and dignity of all members of the school community. A member of staff says, 'The Catholic family is felt outside of the school, knowing that prayers and Masses were being said, brought me comfort at a difficult time.' Opportunities to live the mission are planned throughout the school calendar, this includes work within the local churches and the local community. A wide range of enrichment opportunities are planned which enable every child to participate no matter what their skills or interests. For example, staff support pupils in their leadership of charitable events, raising funds for local food banks, holding theme days for personal charities and wider national charities such as Cafod and Missio. The provision for relationships and sex education meets diocesan requirements.

Leaders and governors, including the team of clergy who support the school, are determined in their pursuit of placing Christ at the heart of the school. The development of Catholic life and mission is embraced as a core leadership responsibility. As a result, policies and practices reflect the charism, identity and mission of the school. Leaders and governors embrace diocesan directives and have recently been awarded the Oscar Romero Participator level award. Structures are in place to ensure staff have the training, support and wellbeing guidance to perform at their best. As a result, staff feel supported and appreciated with one staff member saying, 'We are a kind school, we think about and pray for others, including those less fortunate than ourselves.' A team of chaplains, made up of local priests and deacons, work proactively with staff to ensure strong links with parishes, with one quoting, 'The good thing about being a chaplain here is we can trust the judgement and professionalism of the staff... it is a partnership.' Governors regularly discuss the Catholic life and mission of the school with leaders to ensure parity of funding and status across the school.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

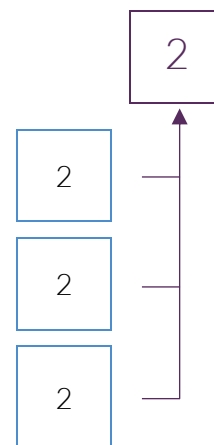
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect the learning required, using a diocesan approved scheme. Pupils are able to recall prior and current learning, making progress against the planned curriculum for each year. In lessons, pupils use appropriate subject-specific vocabulary in their responses and discussions with each other. As a result, pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well relative to their age and stage. Most pupils are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life as seen through their explorations and proactive responses, linking Catholic social teaching principles to the teachings from scripture. For example, in a lesson where pupils linked Jesus washing the disciples' feet to respect and dignity for others. Pupils show upmost respect for each other's learning; as a consequence they are able to concentrate well and take opportunities for independent learning. Pupils enjoy their learning, listen attentively and respond confidently when encouraged to do so. Pupils do however state that they do not always feel their religious education lessons provide the same challenge as literacy and maths. Data and outcomes show those achieving greater depth is not in line with other core subjects. When provided with opportunities to explore scripture through experiential learning techniques, pupils take part enthusiastically supporting each other enabling deeper understanding.

Teachers are provided with a comprehensive scheme of work with guidance and support, which enables them to be confident in their subject knowledge. In lessons, teachers use questioning well to recap prior learning and move learning forward. Pupil achievement is celebrated through regular praise both in lessons and in books. In the best lessons, creative use of resourcing with drama, art work and experiential learning assist in deep exploration of the context, as seen in Key Stage 2 lessons where pupils were provided with creative opportunities to experience exaltation and rejection of Jesus' experiences on Palm Sunday, through active participation. Planning is matched to pupils' skills and in the best lessons seen, teaching assistants are provided in advance with detailed planning to support individual learning needs. Pupils would benefit from a consistent approach to the preparation of all additional adults in the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to use a range of ways for pupils to present learning outcomes. Teachers understand the importance of religious education in informing

positive life decisions as seen in a Key Stage 2 lesson where pupils discussed the purpose and message of The Parable of the Lost Son.

Leaders ensure that the school curriculum for religious education is a faithful expression of the Bishops' directive and follows the approved curriculum. Leaders and governors ensure funding and resourcing for religious education is comparable with other core subjects. Additionally, leaders ensure whole school policies such as those for homework, marking and feedback are applied equally across the whole school curriculum including religious education. The scheduled provision for religious education however does not meet the requirement of 10% neither in the timetable nor in books. The school would benefit from robust monitoring of provision set against the Bishops' mandate to ensure compliance of provision in this respect. The subject leader for religious education has a clear vision to ensure all pupils benefit from the religious education curriculum with it having an impact on their lives and learning, ensuring planning covers all aspects of the directory. Governors support the lead for religious education, providing dedicated time to attend all support mechanisms and training available. This includes diocesan training events and the Bromley Catholic School Trust network meetings. There is a schedule of monitoring which would benefit from review to ensure impactful outcomes.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

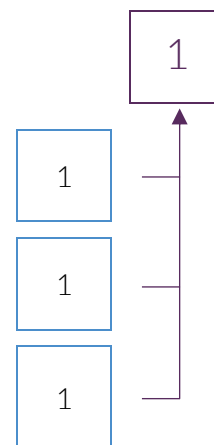
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

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



Pupils engage deeply and with full participation in all activities offered to them. This was seen in passion play rehearsals which included all Year 5 pupils in a moving, spiritual, high-quality presentation using scripture, prayer, drama, narration and song, led and performed by pupils. Pupils engage in any opportunity to sing in worship; they do this passionately and with pride. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to engage in daily prayer and express how they are provided with opportunities to create their own prayers, which they can share with others. During opportunities for prayer and reflection pupils feel safe and supported, confidently presenting personal intentions, which their peers accept with respect and reverence. A creative example of this was a Year 4 group creating prayer through song, developed in the timetabled liturgy sessions and written by the pupils. Pupils are proud to work collaboratively with adults to prepare and lead prayer and liturgy such as the stations of the cross during Lent. The chaplaincy team, commented on parishioners, expressing how much the pupils input enhances the spiritual experiences in their churches.

The centrality of prayer and liturgy is clear across all aspects of school life. This is evidenced on the year 6 PGL visit where a chaplain accompanied the pupils and staff to support prayer provision. Informal prayer spaces are available for quiet reflection including a prayer garden. Furthermore, the chaplaincy team provides in-school reconciliation services and provision for any member of the school community. This team agrees that the familiarisation with Mass and liturgies is strong due to the daily, weekly and seasonal liturgical provision. This includes opportunities such as Lenten devotions before school, crowning of Mary and the use of The Wednesday Word. Liturgical events to explore faith, and deepen understanding through prayer scripture and liturgical celebrations are planned throughout the year. Music, through singing hymns, is weekly practice for all pupils. Similarly, liturgical activities each week provide every child with the opportunity to deepen their faith and understanding of the gospel message. The school makes regular use of the Altar of Mary which is central in the school and is fortunate to have the blessed sacrament in the Oratory.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is regularly reviewed and places daily prayer and liturgy at the centre. Leaders therefore prioritise the timetable of prayer and liturgical opportunities weekly, monthly and annually. Activities are planned to ensure parents are able to take part with liturgies before school, with invitations being sent to parents and families for year group services during the school day. A parent said, 'We love being involved with and invited to Masses, liturgies and services throughout the year.' Leaders provide a wide range of ways to pray and plan opportunities for children to experience scripture, leading to a deepening understanding of the Gospels. Leaders of liturgical events are skilful in empowering pupils to take a leading role in prayer and liturgy through scripture, as they mature through the school. A parent commented, 'Our child has developed a deep faith in God and we will be forever indebted to St. Mary's for nurturing this. Just one example; he loves being an altar server at St. Edmund's on a Sunday and St. Mary's have given him the opportunity to serve at school Masses too.' Holy days and feast days are prioritised in the school calendar, most recently with Ash Wednesday falling in term time, all members of the community were invited to receive ashes. Leaders took time to support staff for whom this practice was new.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary
School unique reference number (URN)	141535
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3055202
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic Primary, Westgate Road, Beckenham, BR3 5DE
School phone number	002086502355
Headteacher	Isobel Vassallo
Chair of governors	Robin Hoyles
School Website	www.st-marys-catholic.bromley.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Handmaids of the Sacred Heart
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	17 May 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Catherine Burnett
Vera Jajechnyk

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