



DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on
behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

URN 141535

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Westgate Road

Beckenham

Kent

BR3 5DE

Inspection date: 17th May 2019

Chair of Governors: Mr J. Hayes

Headteacher: Ms Isobel Vassallo

**Inspectors: Ms Ann Oddy
Ms Penny Rickard**

EDUCATION COMMISSION

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Director of Education: Dr Simon Hughes



Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is an academy in the local authority of Bromley. It is situated in the Bromley deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. The principal parishes which the school serves are St Edmund's, Beckenham; St Mark's, West Wickham and Our Lady of the Rosary, Hayes. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 90%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and 10% in Key Stage 2.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 424. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly average. The proportion of pupils for whom Pupil Premium funding is received is below the national average. 15% of pupils are classified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) and/or Disability (SEND); of these, two pupils have an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP). 47% of pupils are of White British Heritage. 54% of pupils are from other black or minority ethnic heritages, with the largest groups within this being from Black African and other White backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is spoken as an additional language is 20% and is in line with the national average.

The school was originally founded by the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and a representative is still a Trustee of the school. The school is a single academy and a member of the Bromley Catholic Schools Trust (the Umbrella Trust).



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Mary's Catholic Primary is an outstanding school because:

- St Mary's offers a very high standard of Catholic education in an inclusive and welcoming school community. All groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well. Academic standards are high. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel inspired to do their best and to be of service to God, their school and the community. They are exceptional ambassadors for their school, welcoming visitors and eager to share their experience of school life. Parents are appreciative of the school and value the Catholic education it offers. Parents of other Christian denominations and other faiths feel welcomed and valued. Strong leadership at all levels, supported by a conscientious and committed staff team, maintains and develops current high standards and strives for continued improvement.
- The school's mission statement is at the heart of school life. It informs the school's core values and inspires all members of the school community to implement these as part of daily life. The school's Catholic life supports pupils academically and spiritually and fosters their sense of vocation within the school community and beyond. Excellent systems of pastoral care include pupils, parents and staff. The school's Catholic identity is evident in the many displays and artefacts relating to its Catholic life. Good links with local parishes, other Catholic schools and the diocese strengthen the school's partnership with the wider Catholic community.
- The school offers a wide range of prayer and worship opportunities. These reflect the traditions of the Catholic Church, the liturgical year and school celebrations. Parents are invited to join the school in worship and appreciate these opportunities; attendance is high. Pupils are familiar with a range of prayer forms, including the traditional prayers of the Church and can also compose their own prayers. They know that prayer helps them to deepen their relationship with God and they value their opportunities for prayer and reflection.
- High quality teaching and learning in Religious Education motivates and inspires pupils and enables them to achieve their full potential. Standards of attainment are high. Pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons. They are interested and attentive. Work in pupils' books is excellent and demonstrates their considerable pride in their work. Pupils are reflective learners who are able to apply what they have learned in Religious Education to their own lives. Leaders and governors provide effective monitoring and evaluation to maintain and develop the school's high standards.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Continue with school leaders' identified focus on further developing the provision for Relationships and Sex Education.
- Further develop the role of pupils in planning, leading and actively participating in school worship.



Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

1

Catholic Life

1

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

1

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

1

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

1

Religious Education

1

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

1

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

1

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

1

Collective Worship

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

1

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

1



CATHOLIC LIFE

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

- The school is a welcoming and inclusive community where the mission statement inspires and supports all aspects of school life. Evidence includes the excellent relationships between the members of the school community, the consideration pupils show to each other and the support the school extends to its pupils, their families and the wider community. A parent commented, 'This is a lovely school where staff and pupils respect each other and are responsive to the needs of others. In a true Christian spirit, everybody looks out for one another.'
- Pupils and parents speak of belonging to the 'school family'. The family atmosphere has also been noted by outside visitors, including Ofsted and diocesan advisers. A parent commented, 'The school feels like a family – everyone is looked after – parents are cared for as well as children.' Another said, 'The school's Catholic life has helped my family through difficult and challenging times.'
- The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. During this inspection they were exceptionally polite, thoughtful and considerate in lessons and around the school. They are kind to each other and appreciate the need for praise, encouragement and forgiveness, relating this to their school mission and the teachings of Jesus. The school has recently linked its core values with behaviour in a well planned and strategic initiative much appreciated by staff, parents and pupils. These now form an integral part of school life. Rewards are given for pupils exemplifying these values. Pupils were able to make reference to these values in Religious Education lessons and relate them to examples of their behaviour in school.
- The school offers pupils many opportunities to take responsibility. Pupils are conscientious in these roles, recognising them as an opportunity to serve their school and as part of their vocation. Examples include Pupil Chaplains, School Council, Prefects, Playleaders and Reading Buddies. The school encourages pupils to develop their leadership skills and use these to benefit others, using Religious Education, social skills groups and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) to support this.
- Pupils know they have a responsibility to care for others, within the school community and beyond. They are active in fundraising for a number of charities; local, national and international. Examples include the Bromley night shelter, Depaul UK and CAFOD. They take the lead by initiating their own fundraising ideas and deciding on charities to support, often including charities with whom they feel a personal connection. Groups of Year 5 and 6 pupils have completed the first level of the Faith in Action scheme at St Mary's and have been praised for their 'exceptional commitment and enthusiasm' by the scheme coordinator. The enthusiastic Mini Vinnies group has led playtime prayer groups for younger pupils, visited elderly members of a local care home and made cards for members of the local community



as part of their wide-ranging programme to 'Turn concern into action'. They value the opportunity to 'help others, make small changes to our world and make people happy', recognising that this 'makes us become better people'.

- Pupils appreciate their responsibility to care for our common home. A 'Laudato Si' week included devoting the curriculum to this theme and was enriched by outside speakers, including visitors from CAFOD, Thames Water and the Society of St Vincent de Paul.
- Pupils appreciate the Catholic traditions of their school. They enjoy celebrating events in the liturgical year as part of the school's Catholic life. An example is the Year 5 Passion Play which forms part of the school's preparation for Easter. A pupil commented, "The Passion Play is really special to us and it makes us feel part of the story." The Year 6 retreat at Aylesford includes pupils from other schools in the Umbrella Trust, fostering pupils' sense of belonging to a wider Catholic family. This is further developed by good links with local parishes, the deanery and the diocese, including participation in the Good Shepherd liturgy at Aylesford.
- The school offers valuable opportunities for pupils to participate in the John Bosco summer camps, ensuring that disadvantaged pupils and those who would most benefit from this can have a summer break. Fundraising ensures they are able to do this without financial hardship.

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

- The school mission statement is central to school life and is inspired by the educational mission of the Church. It is displayed in all classrooms and together with displays and focal areas ensures that the Catholic identity of the school is immediately evident. It is effectively linked to the school's core values.
- Staff are committed to implementing the mission statement and the Catholic life of the school. They readily participate in events in the school's Catholic life, including charity events, Religious Education theme weeks and retreats. They show their commitment to the wider Catholic family of local schools, attending the annual Bromley deanery Mass for school staff.
- Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Staff are supportive towards each other as they pray and work together. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities such as diocesan courses for newly qualified teachers and those new to teaching in Catholic schools provide support and guidance. Pupils benefit from a range of strategies including social skills groups and the Emotional Literacy programme to foster their behavioural, emotional and moral development. A counsellor is employed by the school to help pupils experiencing difficulties. Pupils interviewed as part of this inspection spoke highly of the care offered by the school. They knew that school staff would listen to and swiftly address any problems that



they might have. 'Worry boxes' in each classroom enable pupils to express any concerns. Pupils know these will be sorted out sensitively and effectively.

- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is well established in the school. Currently it takes place mainly in Years 5 and 6, although plans are in place to extend this by introducing the 'Life to the Full' scheme across all year groups from September 2019. Teaching is in line with the teachings of the Catholic Church. The school has identified further developing RSE as a school priority and this is in line with the recommendations of this inspection.
- The school community encourages pupils to recognise and celebrate their role as members of a diverse community. The well-planned programme of study of other faiths is enriched by visits to places of worship and supported by the school's promoted values of tolerance and respect for all, regardless of belief or ethnicity.
- The school curriculum reflects its commitment to Catholic social teaching, care for our common home and the dignity of the human person. Pupils interviewed as part of this inspection spoke of how important it was to care for each other and the environment, 'God loves us all and we are all valued' and 'We need to look after our world.'
- The school chaplain is a regular visitor to the school, fulfilling a pastoral support role for pupils, parents and staff as well as supporting worship and faith development.
- Parents and other members of the community are welcomed into the school's Catholic life. They are invited to school Masses, liturgies and celebrations. May devotions before school and the May procession were observed as part of this inspection, these were well attended and parents spoke appreciatively of being included in the school's Catholic life. A parent commented, 'God is at the heart of everything they do.' The welcome extends to all families; a parent said, 'My child is not Catholic but has thoroughly enjoyed learning about Catholicism and participating in Christian celebrations and Masses thanks to the school.'
- Parental questionnaires distributed as part of this inspection showed a very high rate of return and were overwhelmingly positive. A parent commented, 'My children are very happy at St Mary's and I am very happy with the Catholic values and education my children receive at the school', this reflected the comments of several others.

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

- The school's leadership is wholeheartedly committed to the Church's mission in education and to ensuring that this is embodied in their school. Leaders are excellent role models and have created a cohesive staff team with a strong sense of Christian community and the importance of the traditions of the Catholic Church, particularly mindful of the school's links to its foundation by the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.



- Leaders consider the Catholic life of the school to be a high priority and are committed to ensuring that Christian values inform and permeate all aspects of school life. They have a commitment to valuing each individual and to nurturing the holistic development of each pupil. This includes academic achievement as well as pupils' relationship with God and other people. This is illustrated by the school as a happy and harmonious community where pupils thrive, make good progress and achieve well.
- School self-evaluation is accurate, reflective and evidence based. It informs school development planning, which has clear objectives, timescales and responsibilities.
- Governors are well informed and active participants in the school's Catholic life. They attend school events and celebrations and receive regular reports from the headteacher and Religious Education subject leader. They are fully involved in school self-evaluation and committed to continued school improvement.
- The school works in partnership with parents, establishing clear lines of communication and ensuring that they feel part of the school community. Examples such as Class Representatives, curriculum presentation evenings, consultation evenings and regular newsletters keep parents informed and involved.



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding.

- Pupils achieve high standards in Religious Education. They make good progress in each key stage, resulting in the great majority of pupils achieving or exceeding age-related expectations. A significant number of pupils demonstrate their ability to work at greater depth. This was seen in the lessons observed. Results for 2018 indicate that 80% of pupils are likely to achieve or exceed age-related expectations by the end of Key Stage 1 and 93% by the end of Key Stage 2. This is clear evidence of high standards of attainment.
- All groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, achieve in line with their peers. Pupil tracking and regular assessment enables the school to target support as appropriate.
- Pupils enjoy Religious Education and appreciate its importance to their own lives. They demonstrate high standards of knowledge and understanding and the ability to reflect on their learning. They use a wide range of religious terminology appropriately and are confident in expressing their own ideas. This was evident in lessons observed as part of this inspection and in pupils' written work.
- In all the lessons observed, behaviour for learning was excellent. Pupils were interested and engaged and keen to do their best. Pupil interviews conducted as part of this inspection indicated that pupils enjoyed their Religious Education lessons and found them challenging and thought provoking.
- A creative approach to the teaching of Religious Education includes the use of theme weeks, retreats, outside visitors and visits. An example is the Easter theme day, when Reception and Key Stage 1 pupils come together for a day of activities to develop pupils' understanding of the Easter story. The use of religious works of art enriches the teaching of Religious Education, stimulating discussion and reflection.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.

- Standards in teaching and learning are high. School monitoring of teaching and learning in Religious Education indicates that lessons are consistently good, with significant evidence of outstanding features; this is in line with lessons observed as part of this inspection.
- During the inspection four lessons, across three key stages, were observed. In addition, brief 'drop ins' took place in a number of other classes, contributing to an overall picture of Religious Education lessons across the school. Lessons showed careful preparation, interesting content and built successfully on previous learning. Pace was used effectively to maintain interest whilst allowing pupils time for thought and reflection. Pupils were asked probing questions to explore their learning and



encouraged to suggest their own questions. Teachers showed good subject knowledge and had high expectations of their pupils. This evidence indicates that standards of teaching and learning are very high and that the Religious Education provided by the school motivates and inspires pupils.

- Appropriate levels of challenge and support are provided to maximise progress and ensure access to the curriculum for all learners. Other adults in the classroom provide effective and sensitive support.
- Work in pupils' books is of high quality, with a range of activities included to engage pupils. Pupils' work shows that they think deeply and can articulate their ideas competently and confidently. A Year 2 pupil was able to explain the Holy Trinity as, 'There is God the Father who made the word, there's God the Son who loved us so much that he came down as Jesus and taught us more about Him and there's God the Holy Spirit who's in our hearts and guides us'.
- The Religious Education leader has provided staff training to manage the change to assessment without levels. A range of 'I can' statements enables teachers to guide pupils in self-assessment and setting their own targets. Marking includes 'next steps' questions to encourage pupils to explore their learning and deepen their understanding. Pupils respond well to these questions, strengthening the dialogue between teacher and pupil as an aid to learning.
- Systems of assessment, including pupil tracking and moderation ensure that all pupil progress is carefully monitored and used to inform teaching and learning. The Religious Education subject leader has attended diocesan training and ensured that all staff are confident in the use of the current systems.
- Parents are informed and involved in their children's Religious Education. Newsletters and the school website keep them aware of current topics being studied, with suggestions as to how they can support their children's learning.
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How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding.

- The school uses 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' programme of Religious Education, supplemented by the 'Come and See' programme as appropriate, in particular for the study of other faiths. Curriculum time is in line with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- Leadership and management of Religious Education is secure. High quality teaching and learning, together with effective systems of assessment and pupil tracking contribute to the high standards of attainment and progress across the school. The subject leader provides training, guidance and support to ensure staff confidence, up to date knowledge and maintenance of high standards of teaching and learning.



- Monitoring includes lesson observations, learning walks and book scrutiny; it forms part of school self-evaluation and informs development planning. Governor visits form part of the monitoring schedule and give them valuable insight into the quality of provision for Religious Education. Regular reports on pupil outcomes mean they are well informed regarding progress and achievement. The link governor for Religious Education visits the school and liaises with the subject leader on a regular basis.
- Religious Education is well resourced, receiving a budget share which is larger than that in other core subjects. This supports and enriches the curriculum. Recent expenditure has enabled the school to build a prayer garden, create a mosaic and improve resourcing for the study of other faiths. Generous contributions from the school's Parent Teacher Association have helped considerably towards implementing these initiatives.
- The school contributes to and benefits from its membership of the Bromley Catholic Schools Umbrella Trust. St Mary's has held moderation sessions for Religious Education, led by the subject leader.
- Areas for development identified by the last inspection have been fully addressed.



COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

- St Mary's provides a wide range of collective worship opportunities. Pupils value these and respond very positively, appreciating that they are an important part of school life. They are encouraged to be directly involved in contributing to worship and enjoy serving their school community in this way. In year group Masses pupils participate by choosing hymns, writing and leading bidding prayers and psalms. Older pupils are altar servers. At school Masses different year groups take responsibility for parts of the Mass, helping pupils to recognise that they are all contributing to an important act of worship in school. School leaders should now consider further developing the role of pupils in planning, leading and actively participating in collective worship.
- Key Stage assemblies reflect the liturgical year and themes in Religious Education and PSHE. Older pupils are involved in planning and preparing these. Pupils interviewed as part of this inspection said how much they enjoyed these occasions.
- Collective worship observed as part of this inspection was the May Procession and May Devotions before school. Before school, pupils and parents gathered to say the Rosary, appreciating this opportunity to come together in prayer. The May Procession was a joyful occasion celebrated by the whole school and parents. All enjoyed this tradition of the Catholic Church, bringing flowers, joining in the prayers and singing tunefully.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its feasts and seasons. They enjoy talking of how these are celebrated in school and their contribution to these occasions. The Passion Play, Nativity Play and Key Stage 2 Carol Service are important annual celebrations. Benediction is included in the school's annual Week of Faith.
- Pupils are confident in their use of a wide range of prayer styles, including composing their own prayers and using the traditional prayers of the Church. School prayer is given an additional dimension through the provision for liturgical dance. A specialist teacher guides pupils regarding expressing their prayers through dance movements, which they can use to create their own liturgical dance and perform this to other pupils. This creative approach is much enjoyed by pupils.
- St Mary's exemplifies a faithful, worshipping community in which prayer and worship nurture the spiritual and moral development of all pupils. Pupils show respect and reverence. They also understand the need to respect the faith, beliefs and practices of others. Pupils interviewed as part of this inspection valued their prayer and worship opportunities. They appreciated that these deepened their relationship with God and strengthened their school community. A pupil said, 'We have lots of celebrations and prayers. These help me to come closer to God and to understand the Gospel.'



The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

- Prayer and collective worship are central to the life of the school. Provision is of a high standard. A well-planned programme of Masses, assemblies and liturgies is woven throughout the school year. Prayer is part of school daily life for staff and pupils. Attractive prayer areas and displays invite reflection and prayer. Staff and governor meetings and training days include prayer. The Prayer Room is available for prayer and reflection by pupils and staff.
- Collective worship is well resourced and planned, with careful choices made to interest and engage pupils and to encourage participation by pupils.
- Staff have a good understanding of the liturgical year, Religious Education themes and how to plan worship to complement these. They are given guidance, support and training to deliver high quality provision.
- Opportunity is made for voluntary prayer, an example being the May devotions before school.
- The school supports pupils preparing for First Holy Communion by prayer and the recognition that this is a special time for them.
- Class prayer books contain pupils' own prayers, which are then used in class worship. Prayer focus areas are attractive and well maintained. Many allow pupils to contribute ideas, reflections and questions and to ask for prayer intentions. They are effectively used as part of the collective worship and prayer life of each class.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.

- School leaders are committed to high quality provision for collective worship and prayer. Together with the chaplain, they model high quality examples and support other staff, building a competent and committed team.
- School leaders and governors are active participants in the school's collective worship and prayer life, acting as role models and recognising that it is essential to the spiritual life of the school and important to them as members of the school community.
- School newsletters and the website keep parents informed and involved and provide an open invitation to join the school in prayer and worship.
- Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship form part of school self-evaluation and planning for continued improvement.



- Provision for collective worship includes ensuring it is inclusive of all pupils and their families. The school achieves this very successfully and this is valued and commented on by parents. Comments included, 'All families are welcomed to religious events and the school is very considerate and inclusive of all denominations.'
- Provision includes the opportunity for daily Mass for pupils on their residential visit, maintaining and enriching their experience of being part of a worshipping community even though they are away from school.