



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School  
Cheltenham Road East, Churchdown, Gloucester  
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DfE Number: 916/3358

Headteacher: Mr. Liam Jordan  
Chair of Governors: Mr Gordon Hanks

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Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Date of inspection: 2-3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014  
Date of previous inspection: 5-6<sup>th</sup> December 2007

Reporting Inspector: Mrs M Barnard

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## Description of School

St. Mary's is an average size primary school with 210 pupils on roll, the vast majority of whom (97%) are baptised Catholic. The majority of pupils are White British and come from a mixed socio economic background. The school serves two parishes and the parish church is adjacent to the school. Links with the parishes are a strong feature of the school. The percentage of pupils with additional needs is slightly below the national average and the number of pupils who receive free school meals is significantly below the national average. Prior attainment on entry is broadly average.

### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding; Grade 2: Good; Grade 3: Requires improvement in order to be good;  
Grade 4: Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school (summary statement)

**Grade 1**

St Mary's is an outstanding Catholic School because:

- There is a shared vision of Catholic Education held by all within the school community
- Outcomes for pupils are excellent and pupils enjoy their learning and benefit greatly from the Catholic life of the school
- Teaching and Learning are a strength and provide outstanding opportunities for pupils
- Parish/school links are very strong and parental support is high
- The innovative curriculum provides very good opportunities for pupils to develop their spirituality and prayer life
- Subject leadership provides excellent support to staff

### The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

- The subject leader and head teacher have a strong capacity to drive the school on even further
- There are strong links between school and parish
- Governors are committed to developing the Catholicity of the school and to maintaining its continuing academic success
- The school enjoys the overwhelming support of parents

### What the school should do to improve further

- The leadership at all levels should continue to develop their systems for monitoring by:
  - Enabling pupils to evaluate more effectively the prayer life and Catholicity to provide a sharper focus for future planning in RE
  - Embedding the monitoring processes that mirror other core areas
  - Strengthening the systematic evaluation of monitoring and evaluation by governors
- Embed pupils' leadership skills in Prayer and Collective Worship even further

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## **How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups?**

Pupils take a lead and are responsible for shaping activities with a religious character, as evidenced by their involvement with 'Churches Together' where they lead reflection days in church for parishioners and pupils during Harvest and Easter. The recent development of the Chaplaincy programme further demonstrates the school's commitment to the involvement of pupils. The school has plans to further extend opportunities for pupils to lead prayer and worship at all levels by implementing the Leaders in Faith' Programme and to evaluate the Catholic life of the school. Pupils are enquiring and reflective and seek justice for all within and beyond the school for example through their fundraising activities for Cafod. They understand the impact of faith on life and visits to the parish church are frequent. The parish priest further facilitates this through his regular visits to the school to develop pupils' liturgical understanding and his warm rapport with the children. Pupils are proud of their backgrounds and beliefs and can express their views with confidence. They can refer to scripture and are confident in discussing aspects of their faith. They value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and their links with the parish communities. There is a culture of respect for others across the school at all levels.

The proportion of pupils making and exceeding expected progress is high. Standards across the school are good or better and there are systems in place for tracking the attainment of pupils over time. Assessment data is largely accurate. Almost all pupils, including the youngest pupils, concentrate well and are rarely off task in extended periods without needing adult direction. Pupils are motivated and enthusiastic and enjoy challenging activities. They are keen to succeed and to extend and improve their learning. Pupils with additional needs are well supported in the school through careful interventions and very good support from the SEND coordinator and teaching assistants. This support ensures that all pupils achieve very well in relation to their abilities. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning in RE and their responses were very positive and illustrated some perceptive views, for example one pupil said they thought their faith was important 'because it can help you through tough times in your life'.

Pupils pray regularly together in their classrooms and in assemblies, know traditional prayers and have opportunities for personal prayer. The pupils are at ease when praying and the Y2 Collective Worship was an excellent example of the spiritual dimension of the children's prayer life and their ability to act reverently and with respect even at a young age. Pupils are skilled in using a variety of ways and means to support private and public prayer and this is supported by their involvement with Churches Together and the liturgical support offered by the parish priest. Pupils are regularly involved with the parish priest in planning and preparing for liturgies and these valuable opportunities greatly enhance their understanding, appreciation and participation in prayer and worship and their relationship with God. Pupils demonstrated their enjoyment of RE through the recent Catholic Dance Experience workshops that included all pupils during the school's cross curricular Arts Week. Pupil's understanding of the sacramental life of the Church is well developed and was evident during the Inspection.

**Grade 1**

## **How effective are leaders and governors in developing the Catholic Life of the school?**

Leaders and governors are deeply committed to promoting the Catholic life of the school. They are excellent role models for the whole community and provide a secure basis for the mission of the church. The school Mission is a priority and supports the spiritual and moral development of pupils. Pupils can articulate the school's ethos with understanding and appreciation. The Catholic life of the school is well

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understood and lived out by staff. Monitoring activities by the school relating to provision and outcomes provide a basis for an accurate diagnosis of the schools strengths and areas for development. This was evidenced in the detailed SEF outlining the progress made and the impact of actions taken by the school. The school's monitoring systems now need to be aligned with the processes in place for other core subjects. Governors need to act corporately in systematically monitoring, analysing and evaluating developments in RE and recording the progress of actions taken by the school. Pupils can articulate the school's ethos with understanding and appreciation. All staff are very well supported by the RE subject leader who works closely with the Link governor and the head teacher to provide strong leadership to the school. Inset days provide direction and support to all staff in teaching RE and understanding the Church's mission.

The self-evaluation document is an accurate reflection of the strengths and areas for development in the school. This self-evaluation tool demonstrates the school's commitment to a process of continual development. It leads to well -targeted planning for improvements which accurately reflect the needs of the school and lead to positive results. The subject leader monitors the progress of all pupils and the quality of teaching and learning and provides support to staff where needed. Outcomes for the majority of pupils in Religious Education accurately match their ability. Teachers feel very well supported by the school leadership and the overall teaching of RE is of a high quality. The school has recently trialled an assessment ladder system in pupils' books so that pupils can see the progress they are making and what they need to do to achieve the next level. The Link governor for RE, who is also the parish priest, meets regularly with the RE subject leader and the head teacher to monitor RE and discuss developments. Governors fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities.

## **Grade 2**

*What the school needs to do to move this section to Grade 1:*

- Develop further systematic and rigorous monitoring and evaluation to reflect the processes in place for other core subjects
- Staff, pupils and parents are fully involved in shaping and supporting the Catholic Life of the school
- Strengthening the governors oversight of Religious Education to improve their knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school in order to monitor and evaluate actions for improvement more effectively

## **How effective is the provision for Catholic Education?**

The majority of teaching in the school is outstanding and is very effective in enthusing pupils and ensuring that they learn extremely well. Teachers and other adults are aware of the capabilities of their pupils, their prior learning and understanding, and so plan very effectively to meet each child's needs. Excellent subject knowledge, supported by the subject leader, allows teachers to challenge and inspire pupils and this enables pupils to make very good progress in Religious Education. Technology is used effectively to support pupils to work independently to research topics and formulate their responses as seen in an upper key stage 2 class that was working on the Sacrament of the Sick. In the best lessons differentiation is used very effectively as in a group of less able learners who were reflecting on class rules and their own behaviour and the impact this can have on others in a lesson on the Ten Commandments. Challenging marking invites responses from pupils is well used across the school to prompt further discussion and reflection. The behaviour of pupils across the school during lessons was excellent and this allowed them to engage in and thoroughly enjoy their learning. Teaching assistants were utilised well to support the learning. The assessment ladders in the pupils books, being trialled across the school allow pupils to understand the level they are working at and provides 'next steps' needed for the next level. The school has agreed to embed this system across the school from September.

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All Bishops' Conference and local diocesan requirements are met. The RE curriculum helps pupils to reflect on their Catholic faith and to respond to and reflect on questions of meaning and purpose. They sustain concentration extremely well and thoroughly enjoy their work in RE. Achievement and effort are celebrated through regular assemblies. The curriculum covers a range of other faiths including Judaism and Islam. Provision for Relationship and Sex Education is in place and has been approved by governors. The school is committed to cross curricular links to successfully promote opportunities for spiritual, moral and vocational development. This was demonstrated in the cross curricular day led by a team from the Catholic Dance Ministry during the school's Arts Week, when all pupils were offered the opportunity to express themselves spiritually through dance and music. In this way pupils were able to express their responses to spiritual themes in non-verbal but very meaningful ways. Pupils were also involved in creating artwork based on the Mission statement that was to be displayed in the hall. During the Inspection, pupils were articulate in discussing RE themes and demonstrated their knowledge and understanding very well. They were enthusiastic and highly motivated and showed a great pride in their Catholic school and their faith within the community.

Prayer is central to the life of the school and a key part of every celebration. Prayers are said regularly each day in all classes. Frequent prayer opportunities are planned for staff and pupils, for example class and school Masses and these are very well supported by parents and the parish communities for which the school serves. Many parents and pupils are closely involved with the life of the parish and the community is welcomed into the school. Pupils' liturgical formation is well planned and appropriate and shows progression. The parish priest provides regular excellent opportunities to pupils in support of their liturgical formation through his work with classes and groups of pupils in the preparation of Masses. The warm relationship allows pupils to ask questions and listen to explanations about liturgy and this gives pupils an excellent foundation for understanding the Mass. Pupils write their own prayers, read and sing responses and in this way they are able to fully participate in many aspects of the Mass. Further opportunities are provided for pupils to participate in worship as demonstrated by the excellent Y2 Collective Worship which was reverent, prayerful and spiritual. Older pupils are already able to plan and lead worship and this will be further developed across the school through the recently introduced Leaders in Faith programme. Staff and pupils have a wide range of resources available to them in support of the RE curriculum. The Church seasons are a focal point of school life.

**Grade 1**

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## Summary of Parental Questionnaires

There were 126 parental questionnaires returned and there were no negative comments. The overwhelming majority of responses agreed with the statements in the questionnaires and were complimentary about the school, the staff, the head teacher and the parish priest. In particular, they were very complimentary about the Catholic ethos and the school's links with the parish. Some responses from parents to the question 'what is distinctive about this school?' are:

'The sense of community it creates and its Catholic ethos'

'Always a happy and welcoming feel which provides a lovely atmosphere

Trust, respect and love for one another – great values, well taught'

'The parish priest has a fantastic relationship with his parish and the school'

'A lovely, close caring community. We feel blessed that our children attend St. Mary's. A lovely caring school with great teachers and leaders'

'Amazing Catholic identity'

'My children are so happy to go to school'