

# Archdiocese of Cardiff



## St. Mary's Catholic Primary School Chepstow

<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>14 – 16 October 2013</b>
<b>Reporting Inspector</b>	<b>Mrs B Hancock</b>
<b>Accompanying Inspector</b>	<b>Miss C Power</b>
<b>Type of school</b>	<b>Primary</b>
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	<b>4 - 11</b>
<b>Number on roll</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Monmouthshire</b>
<b>Chair of Governors</b>	<b>Mr R Cottrell</b>
<b>School Address</b>	<b>Old Bulwark Road, Chepstow Monmouthshire NP16 5JE</b>
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<b>Parishes served</b>	<b>St Mary's, Chepstow St Paul's, Caldicot</b>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	<b>5 November 2007</b>
<b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Mr Michael Gorell</b>

## Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archdiocese of Cardiff and Inspection of denominational education under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on prospects for improvement.

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice or practise that is both consistent and highly effective.
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The table below shows the terms that Archdiocesan inspectors use and a broad idea of their meaning. It is for guidance only.

<b>Proportion</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>With very few exceptions</b>	<b>Nearly all</b>
<b>90% or more</b>	<b>Most</b>
<b>70% or more</b>	<b>Many</b>
<b>60% or more</b>	<b>A majority</b>
<b>Close to 50%</b>	<b>Half/around half</b>
<b>Below 40%</b>	<b>A minority</b>
<b>Below 20%</b>	<b>Few</b>
<b>Less than 10%</b>	<b>Very few</b>

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Archdiocesan website: [www.rcadc.org](http://www.rcadc.org)

## Context

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided school in the trusteeship of the Archdiocese of Cardiff. The school opened in 1969 and provides a Catholic education for pupils primarily from the parishes of St Mary's, Chepstow and St Paul's, Caldicot. However, at present, the school draws pupils from the whole of South Monmouthshire and the parts of Gloucestershire that are located between the Rivers Wye and Severn. 12% of the pupils travel to school by bus

St. Mary's caters for pupils aged 4 to 11 years. At the time of inspection, the school had 204 pupils on roll. Of these, 33% are baptised Catholic pupils, 37% are pupils of other Christian denominations, 16% of pupils are of other faiths, and 14% of pupils have no faith. No pupils are withdrawn from Religious Education.

Pupils represent the full ability range. 12% of the pupils are identified as having special educational needs with 2% having a statement of special educational need. 8% of pupils are eligible to receive free school meals and 5% of pupils have English as an additional language. No pupils come from Welsh speaking homes.

A number of changes have taken place since the last Inspection. Since 2007, there has been a gradual trend for the majority of pupils attending St Mary's to come from Chepstow. Pupil numbers have gradually increased and are now at their highest level for a number of years. The deputy headteacher was appointed in 2012.

Significant building works have taken place at the school to improve the fabric of the building. New windows, doors, ramps and fencing have upgraded the exterior, while the creation of a forest school area and gardening areas have ensured that the attractive school grounds are child friendly and offer many opportunities to enhance the curriculum.

The school has 8 full time teachers including the headteacher, 7 of whom are Catholic. One teacher is currently studying for the *Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies*, 6 members of staff have gained the qualification. One member of staff has the *National Professional Qualification for Headteachers* and another holds the *MA in Catholic Leadership*. The school has 6 learning support assistants.

School achievements include the *Healthy Schools Award* and *Eco Schools Silver Award*.

## Summary

<b>How effective is the school in providing Catholic education?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
The school is adequate because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the Catholic ethos permeates all aspects of school life.</li><li>• effective pastoral care promotes pupils' wellbeing.</li><li>• children enjoy Religious Education and are happy to express their views and opinions.</li><li>• partnerships with parents are good and they are welcomed to the school.</li><li>• the Religious Education subject leader is knowledgeable, committed and has the respected of the school community;</li><li>• standards of achievement for many pupils are adequate.</li><li>• teaching and assessment in Religious Education are judged as adequate.</li><li>• areas previously identified as needing improvement have not been fully addressed.</li></ul>	
<b>What are the school's prospects for improvement?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
The school's prospects for improvement are adequate because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the head teacher and subject leader embrace the Catholic ethos of the school and want the school to develop and move forward.</li><li>• although recent developments in self-evaluation processes and monitoring are beginning to make an impact on outcomes, they are insufficiently embedded in the life of the school.</li><li>• there is a shared understanding among school leaders of what actions need to be undertaken to help the school to improve.</li><li>• progress since the last inspection has been limited.</li></ul>	

## Recommendations and Required Actions

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- R1:** Embed assessment, monitoring and pupil tracking systems in Religious Education to inform planning and ensure that individual pupils receive differentiated support and challenge.
- R2:** Develop a shared pedagogy of teaching to improve the quality of teaching so that all lessons have pace, challenge and engage all groups of learners.
- R3:** Build capacity within the staff to ensure that the responsibilities of the Religious Education subject leader are widely distributed at different levels so that school self-evaluation is more closely connected to improvement in learning outcomes.
- R4:** Further develop Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies to enable all pupils to increase their engagement, personal responsibility and ownership for their learning;
- R5:** Extend opportunities to use ICT as a tool to develop pupils' learning.

### What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by the Archdiocese.

## **Main Findings**

<b>KQ1. How good are outcomes?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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Strengths outweigh areas for improvement.

St Mary's is a warm and welcoming school with a strong Catholic ethos whose Catholic identity is immediately apparent. The school's mission statement "Learning for life as Christ is our Light" is prominently displayed in the entrance hall, on the school's website and prospectus.

It is a "family friendly" school with a strong sense of belonging. The school has very good relationships with parents, providing them with a wide range of information and welcoming them to join in many aspects of school life. Parents are supportive of the school, know that their children are safe, happy and feel confident to approach leaders and teachers at any time. They are kept well informed about the content of the Religious Education curriculum through the newsletter. They are highly appreciative of the school's positive ethos, the pastoral care the school offers and the Catholic values and attitudes it promotes.

The parish church of St. Mary's stands alongside the school and presents many opportunities for involvement of the children in the parish, and highlights the sense of the school being part of the wider mission of the Church. Prayer and collective worship are an integral part of the life of the school. Pupils are able to take part in school Masses at St. Mary's parish church and there is a varied programme of prayer and worship during the school year including assemblies of different types and other liturgies such as the Harvest Festival. There are special prayer groups which pupils are able to attend at lunchtime and opportunities for pupils to write their own prayers and to share these with others. Pupils pray with their teachers daily. Every classroom has a prayer focus area, clearly linked to themes and topics being studied in Religious Education.

The pupils' response to the Catholic life of the school is good. They are confident and secure in expressing their own views and values according to their age and capacity. They are proud of their school and recognise the part they have to play in responding to the needs of others. They know that adults are there to help them in all aspects of their school life. They are encouraged to consider the needs of the wider community and are actively involved in supporting a number of charities such as the local food bank. The school also has links with and charities that are well established and are keen to talk about their fundraising activities for CAFOD and Action Aid.

Behaviour in and around the school is good. Pupils have a good understanding of what is right and what is wrong and they welcome the rules that are in place to keep them safe. The School Council and Eco group make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Pupils respond to opportunities to take responsibility around the school for their own behaviour and take care of the younger children. They co-operate very well with each other.

The pupils develop positive attitudes to keeping healthy. The school uses SEAL to teach the social and emotional curriculum and moral guidance through Religious Education. At present there is no teaching of Sex and Relationship Education.

There are range of popular extra-curricular activities that enrich pupils' learning experiences. The breakfast club and after school club provide a welcoming, safe, secure environment for pupils before and at the end of the school day.

On entry to school, many children have a limited knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith. The youngest pupils learn quickly from the start to pray and make the Sign of the Cross well and come to understand the special and reverent nature of prayer time. Proper emphasis is placed on the wider mission of the Church, integrating the school particularly in the thorough preparation of the pupils for the sacraments.

Standards achieved in curriculum Religious Education are adequate.

Most pupils make adequate progress and gain knowledge, skills and understanding at a satisfactory rate. The quality of pupils' work is acceptable, enabling most pupils by the end of the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 to achieve the expected level for their age. However, the tasks set often do not appropriately meet the needs of all pupils and lack challenge. The pace of learning is insufficient for pupils to make a good rate of progress. This lack of differentiation is a significant barrier to pupils achieving their full potential. There is also a gap between the attainment of boys and girls, with girls outperforming boys.

<b>KQ2. How good is provision?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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Strengths outweigh areas for improvement.

The quality of teaching across the school is variable, ranging from adequate to good. In the majority of lessons observed, pupils listened attentively to their teachers and settled quickly to tasks. They enjoyed learning and were keen to respond to teachers' questioning.

In the Foundation Phase, a range of teaching styles is evident, encouraging the children to express their responses to the tasks set through role-play, ICT, writing, painting, model making and creative work undertaken in the school grounds. Many pupils respond enthusiastically to the tasks set and make appropriate progress. Learning support assistants work diligently to support children's learning.

In Key Stage 2, pupils continue to approach tasks with enthusiasm. Teachers use ICT to engage children and support the recall of prior knowledge; however, there is little evidence of pupils using ICT as a tool to enhance learning in Religious Education.

In the majority of lessons observed, pupils were given opportunities to work collaboratively. Pupils cooperated well with each other and enjoyed positive relationships with all staff. In a minority of Key Stage 2 classes, lengthy “teacher led” introductions were not sufficiently sharply focussed, which resulted in pupils losing concentration and giving poor quality responses.

Few lessons observed included the use of the Welsh language in Religious Education however, bilingual key words were displayed on class prayer tables. The teaching about other faiths, which enables pupils to gain an understanding of other world faiths, is underdeveloped.

Teachers deliver the *Here I Am* Religious Education scheme using activities from the archdiocesan medium term exemplar planning materials, ensuring that the school meets all statutory requirements and requirements for Religious Education. The school has not yet developed a system of short term planning that identifies differentiated activities to ensure that the needs of all pupils are consistently met.

Evaluations of planning lack detail and do not make a significant impact on future learning. Too few opportunities are planned for pupils to develop independence or to enhance pupil learning in Religious Education and there is an over-reliance on worksheets. This results in a lack of challenge for more able pupils and limits the progress for others and so hinders progress. Assessment for Learning strategies are evident in most classes. Marking and oral feedback affirms how well pupils are doing, but it does not identify consistently how pupils can move forward with their learning.

The school has a broadly accurate picture of pupils’ achievements. The Religious Education subject leader has begun to moderate samples of work with staff. A portfolio has been developed over the last two years. Teachers would benefit from further whole-school in-service training to moderate pupils work, both in-house and across the cluster, to ensure that staff are secure in their judgements. The recently developed pupil-tracking system and pupils’ “*I can*” target cards should enable the school to analyse pupils’ current performance and progress over time.

Acts of collective worship, in a variety of settings, provide opportunities for pupils and adults to pray together. Themes are consistent with the Catholic character of the school, reflect *Here I Am* topics and celebrate the liturgical year. Class assemblies are joyful occasions and are well attended by parents and family members.

A minority of pupils are given opportunities to plan, prepare and lead acts of collective worship in class, this is in the early stages and the school recognises the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to become better skilled and equipped to plan, prepare and lead their own acts of worship.



<b>KQ3. How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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St Mary's is a school on a journey of improvement. The school is led by a dedicated head teacher who, together with the governing body, positively promotes the Catholic life of the school. The school's leaders are very committed to the school and its Catholic mission. Governors discharge their statutory and canonical responsibilities. As a core subject, 10% of curriculum time is devoted to Religious Education.

Many members of the governing body have been recently appointed and they are keen to support the school and its position within the local community. Plans are in place for the Religious Education link governor to deepen her knowledge and understanding of the Religious Education curriculum and the standards achieved. The governing body's role in providing effective challenge and support is adequate, but the information they receive is not sufficiently focused upon the progress of the school's religious development plans and pupil progress. Consequently, governors only have broadly accurate view of pupil progress. The newly structured governing body has a key role in supporting the senior leadership in bringing about further improvements

Attendance at archdiocesan meetings, the CCRS course and MA in Catholic Leadership are highly valued as a means of continued professional development. The subject leader leads staff training in the school. There are induction procedures in place and newly appointed staff are supported through mentoring and training.

There is a clear approach, promoted by governors and staff, to foster community cohesion, based on clear gospel values and seeing Jesus in our neighbours both near and far. All are included in the life of the school and pupils generously reach out to the local and global community. Those of other denominations feel that they are able to express their beliefs comfortably.

The school has a successful and active Parent Teacher Association, which also works closely with the school when developing new projects. The school has very good partnerships with its feeder high school and although effective transition arrangements are in place, these do not include Religious Education. There are links with the University of Wales and students from local schools undertake work experience at the school.

The school's resources to support its Catholic life and curriculum Religious Education are good. The school has been investing in ICT resources and software to support teaching and learning in Religious Education and worship, however there was little evidence at present of the pupils' use of ICT in developing their learning.

The school is the early stages of putting in place robust self-evaluation strategies to monitor of the quality of teaching and learning as a means to raise standards. The school's self-evaluation document is clear but not all of the judgements are based on robust evidence. Leaders have generally identified the school's strengths together with the areas for improvement and have plans in place to

move the school forward. However, the impact of these plans is reduced as there is no clear planned timetable of implementation and the focused actions do not have related, measurable, impact milestones.

Moderation of pupils' work takes place in-house to ensure consistency in standards and to develop a shared understanding of pupils' levels of achievement. There are appropriate systems of assessment, pupil tracking and recording pupil progression in Religious Education in place, but these are not yet sufficiently developed to inform planning. The school undertakes monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. However, this is not focused on particular aspects of teaching and learning. As a result, opportunities to affirm strengths and target specific areas for development are limited.

## Appendix 1

### Responses to parent questionnaires

39 responses were received (24% of families). Parents/carers are very proud of their school. They stated that they chose St. Mary's because of its Catholic ethos and values and its good reputation in the community. Parents/carers commented favourably on the school's loving, caring family atmosphere, its values, attitudes and moral guidance.

- Nearly all parents are happy with the values and attitudes that the school promotes.
- Nearly all parents state that they are made to feel welcome in the school and that the school seeks their views and takes account of their suggestions and concerns.
- Nearly all parents believe that the school gives them a clear understanding of what is taught in Religious Education.
- Nearly all parents are happy with the help and guidance available to their children. Most parents agree that the school enables their children to develop spiritually through prayer and worship.
- Nearly all parents feel that the school keeps them well informed about their children's progress in Religious Education.
- Nearly all also state that the school provides a clear understanding of what is taught in personal, social and health education and about healthy eating.

## Appendix 2

### Evidence Base

- Pre-inspection team consultation
- The school's self-evaluation reports and other relevant documentation
- Meetings with the head teacher and subject leader.
- Discussions with the Religious Education link governor
- A meeting with parents
- Lesson observations
- Scrutiny of planning and assessment
- Scrutiny of pupils' work
- Scrutiny of prayer foci and displays
- Attendance at whole-school and class-based acts of worship
- Discussions with the School Council and Eco Committee
- Discussions with pupils
- Discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff
- Parent questionnaire returns
- Observation of daily routines