



St Mary's RC Primary School

URN: 401551

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Cardiff-Menevia

04–05 December 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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

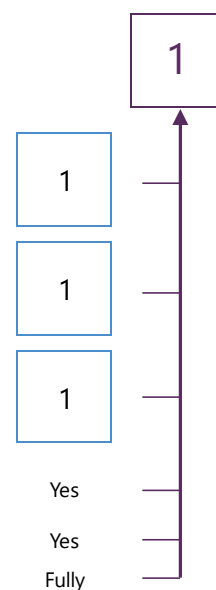
Collective worship (p.7)

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 fully complies with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is in full compliance with the additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school has carried out a thorough programme of work in order to carry out the recommendations for improvement made in its previous S50 inspection. This work is documented in detail.

What the school does well

- The strong and inclusive Catholic community that has been developed is excellent. Relationships are particularly strong. Christ is clearly at the core of school life.
- There is a high quality of teaching in place across the school. A particular strength in relation to this is its consistency, without significant variability. Pupils' learning greatly benefits as a result and they progress rapidly from a low baseline point.
- The behaviour and demeanour of pupils are excellent. They display a very positive attitude towards learning. They greatly value being a part of the school and their reverence during collective worship is exceptional.
- The quality of collective worship is consistently excellent across the whole school. A highly prayerful atmosphere is created and the children sing beautifully.
- The work of the leadership team is excellent, and they exhibit a determination to achieve the very best for learners. Particularly impressive is the manner in which the principles of Catholic social teaching and the Pupil Profile Virtues have been skilfully interwoven into the life of the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the impressive planning of the religious education curriculum already completed to further extend its depth and breadth.
- Continue the innovative work already done to even further enrich the quality of prayer and liturgy throughout the school, including the design of a progression model for pupil-led worship.

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

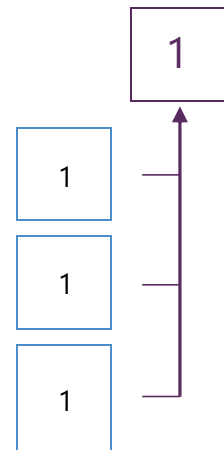
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 at St Mary's fully embrace the Catholic identity and mission of the school through the manner in which they actively engage with it. This has a very positive impact on the school's prayer life and charitable works, for example, which are thoroughly well established. They are proud to be pupils at the school. They feel happy and secure within the extremely caring environment that has been created. Pupils flourish as they grow in virtue. Thanks to the excellent work of staff, they are aware of the principles of Catholic social teaching such as the Church's preferential option for the poor and the need for all people to be treated with dignity. Consequently, they are proactive in supporting a broad range of charities, locally and globally, including Cafod, Oxfam, Save the Children, the British Red Cross, Nazareth House and the Trussell Trust Foodbank. In discussion, pupils can use complex vocabulary to articulate the rationale that underpins this impressive work. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The respect they show for one another, staff and visitors, is immediately noticeable and remarkable.

All staff show an admirable level of commitment to the day-to-day implementation of the school's Mission Statement. Therefore, a thriving community has been established, which is based upon Catholic tradition and practice. Gospel values drive the work of staff. The quality of relationships across the school is excellent and a very strong culture of welcome is firmly in place. This relates to leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, administration staff, lunchtime supervisors and the caretaker. The work done to ensure that the community is an inclusive one is excellent. It is diverse. Approximately half of the pupils are Catholic, 17% are of no faith, 28% have English as an additional language (EAL) and 10% are entitled to receive free school meals (eFSM). All are valued equally, and they form a cohesive and happy school family. Staff are excellent role models for pupils through the way they bear witness to the school's Catholic life and mission. The level of pastoral care provided is excellent. The most vulnerable pupils, in particular, benefit greatly from this. The deputy head teacher

is dedicated to her work in this area. The Morning Nurture Group, for example, is an excellent initiative and it allows pupils who may otherwise struggle to have a smooth and calm start to their learning days. Staff know the pupils well and this further enhances the quality of pastoral care. The school environment is clearly Catholic in nature and high-quality corridor and hall displays are in place. The school makes effective use of the resources identified by the Archdiocese to provide relationships and sex education in an age-appropriate manner.

Leaders display a very impressive sense of vocation in all that they do for the school, and they carry out their duties to be guardians of its Catholic life and mission in an excellent manner. They ensure that Christ is at the centre of the school's life. They are admirable role models for the whole school community. Their approach to working as a team is energetic, positive and dynamic. They work effectively in partnership with the Archdiocese. They ensure that training opportunities are attended regularly, and they have put themselves at its service by providing staff to contribute to working parties that have, in turn, benefitted schools more widely. The head teacher is fully committed to her role, and she leads the school with drive and a determination to achieve high standards. Leaders realise that parents are the first educators of their children, and they work well in partnership with them. The parents who inspectors spoke with were uniformly positive about the work of leaders. The responses to the parental questionnaire completed as a part of the inspection process were overwhelmingly positive (97%). Leaders have done excellent work to ensure that the principles of Catholic social teaching and of the school's Pupil Profile Virtues (being Intentional and Prophetic during the inspection) are interwoven into the taught curriculum and into prayer and liturgy. Governors are very knowledgeable about the life of the school, and they are fully committed to their roles. They have a positive and ambitious approach.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

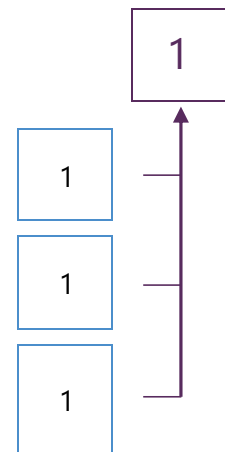
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Over time, pupils develop excellent knowledge, understanding and skills as laid down in the *Religious Education Directory*. This is not just the result of the impressive religious education (RE) lessons that take place throughout the school, but also due to the comprehensive development and promotion of the principles of Catholic social teaching and the Profile Virtues which are threaded through pupils' experiences regularly. This work is outstanding. Consequently, pupils' subject-specific vocabulary is broad, and they attain high levels of religious literacy. This approach is very ambitious and fruitful. During the inspection pupils in Year 2, for example, were discussing the way in which a range of the Nativity's key characters were being either intentional or prophetic in their actions. They went on to reflect on how they could put these virtues into practice in their relationships in school. The school's baseline data indicates that pupils join with low levels of basic religious knowledge; however, all cohorts make rapid progress as they move through the school. Learners show a positive attitude towards their RE lessons and they are very well engaged. Their behaviour during lessons is outstanding and they can concentrate on their studies for extended periods of time. Pupils reported to inspectors that they greatly enjoy their RE lessons. Their academic attainment levels in RE are high.

Teachers have high expectations of their pupils, and they are fully committed to their roles. They have strong levels of subject knowledge. Consequently, the quality of teaching is very impressive. A particularly notable strength is the consistency of this throughout the school; there is no significant variability. Teachers know their pupils very well. This allows them to target learning activities effectively to allow for maximum progress to be made. A pioneering and ambitious approach to the planning of the curriculum has been taken. Staff have achieved this with direct reference to the Directory. This, in turn, has resulted in a coherent programme of learning for pupils in which strong levels of progression and challenge are assured. An illustration of the level of challenge during the inspection involved Year 6 pupils, for example, comparing the approaches of the synoptic Gospel

narratives of St Matthew and St Luke in relation to the Nativity story. Teachers plan to regularly review and refine this planning. This approach will create opportunities to further broaden and deepen learning experiences for pupils. Teachers use good questioning skills consistently across the school. This area of practice could be further enhanced using deeper probing techniques. Teachers skilfully ensure that reflection time for learners is built into lessons, and prayer features strongly in many lessons.

Leaders and governors show an admirable level of commitment to their roles. They have ensured that not only is the RE curriculum faithful to the Directory but that an impressive and coherent programme of learning is in place for pupils; it affords opportunities for excellence to be achieved. The skills of the head teacher, deputy head teacher and the leadership team for RE complement one another extremely well and their considerable efforts have resulted in curricular RE being in a very strong position. They work together in an impressive spirit of co-operation. Their work to monitor, evaluate and review (MER) is thorough and impressive. It has resulted in a wealth of data being available to make judgements about the quality of the school's work. This MER work is not only quantitative but also qualitative. Leaders carry out termly learning review meetings with staff in which pupils' progress is discussed in detail. Leaders make use of training opportunities provided by the Archdiocese and they work closely with partner schools to provide appropriate professional development opportunities for staff. Thorough self-evaluation is carried out in this area which has a direct impact on future planning for improvement. Currently, for example, the School Development Plan has a focus on further improving and refining assessment procedures in relation to the Directory.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

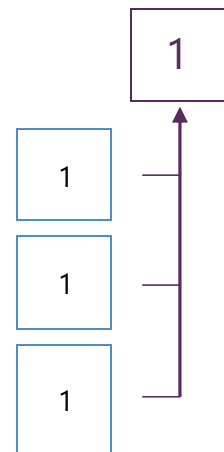
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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, with great respect and reverence in all prayer and liturgy observed. The acts of worship were dynamic and expressively shared by pupils and staff. Throughout the school, pupils sang and signed hymns joyously. Pupils describe prayer as 'a special time when they speak and listen to God' and they know they can pray at any time and in any place. Meditation, silent and reflective prayer are well established, and throughout the school all pupils reverently used the Examen to reflect on their day. The prayer policy includes a strategy to ensure pupils' knowledge of traditional prayers is built up progressively each year. Consequently, appropriate to their age and capacity, they have a secure knowledge of traditional prayers, saying some in Welsh.

Throughout the school, groups of pupils plan collaboratively and with staff to deliver a well-constructed experience of weekly class worship based on current RE topics, virtues and Catholic social teaching. The independent pupil-led planning observed was impressive and the use of IT to collaborate, create and record the experience was skilful and engaging. Pupils have a detailed understanding of how prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school community, and they articulated numerous examples of when they have prayed for others, including the poor and oppressed. They understand how the liturgical year influences their prayer life, citing the rosary club during May and October, Reconciliation during Lent, Advent and Easter celebrations. The rich prayer experience ensures skilful links are made to the Virtues programme and with Catholic social teaching, providing a very clear message for pupils and a powerful tool with which to go forward and act in their own community and globally.

The school's prayer and liturgy calendar is guided by the Church year and Catholic tradition. They are naturally embedded in the daily rhythm of the school, making it integral to lessons and gatherings of pupils, staff and leaders. One member of staff stated that for vulnerable pupils, prayer was the best intervention tool used by the school. All staff are excellent role models and joyously

participate in prayer and liturgy. They shared their view that the head teacher and senior leaders are dedicated witnesses to the faith, and that they led by example, offering excellent support and guidance for worship. Consequently, all staff are well-trained and use their skills to enhance and enrich liturgy for participants. The school makes excellent use of the spaces within the school to provide prayer stations, and the newly opened prayer garden provides an attractive outdoor prayer and reflection space. Displays around the school are vibrant and supportive of prayer. All staff thoughtfully work with families and the parish to include them in the prayer life of the school and the regular celebrations of Mass throughout the year. The informative website posts an online monthly prayer calendar which pupils enjoy completing with their families.

The school's prayer and collective worship policies are helpful documents and make the school expectations clear to all. The governing body is ambitious for all aspects of the school. The Catholic Life and Mission committee focus on prayer and liturgy at each meeting and ask pertinent questions with the aim of raising standards further. Leaders and governors have undertaken audits related to the prayer life of the school and the link governor for religious education regularly joins senior leaders to undertake monitoring activities. Governors ensure a sufficient budget is in place to provide high-quality resources to support collective worship and they proclaim prayer and liturgy as the underpinning keystone of the school.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's RC Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	401551
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	6803302
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's RC Primary School, Queens Hill, Newport, NP20 5HJ
School phone number	001633840490
Headteacher	Donna Evans
Chair of governors	Martyn Wiltshire
School Website	www.stmarysnewport.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	1 st – 3 rd December 2014
Previous denominational inspection grade	GG

The inspection team

Lyndon Watkins
Sheelagh McCool

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

