

# Archdiocese of Cardiff



## Inspection Report

### St Mary's Catholic Primary School Bridgend

Inspection dates	23 - 25 October 2017
Reporting Inspector	Catherine Power
Accompanying Inspector	Gareth Rein
Type of school	Primary
Age range of pupils	3-11
Number on roll	256
Local Authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Chair of Governors	Mr David Bolton
School Address	Llangewydd Road Bridgend CF31 4JW
Tel. no.	01656 815560
E-mail address	head.stmarys@bridgend.gov.uk
Parishes served	St Mary's Bridgend Our Lady Star of the Sea, Porthcawl St Joseph of Arimathea, Pyle
Date of previous inspection	6 - 7 July 2009
Headteacher	Mr Lyndon Watkins

## 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 Archdiocese of Cardiff Schools website: [www.rcadcschools.org](http://www.rcadcschools.org)

## Context

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a Voluntary Aided Primary School situated in Bridgend. The school is maintained by Bridgend County Borough Council and is under the trusteeship of the Archdiocese of Cardiff.

The principal parishes that the school serves are St Mary's in Bridgend, Our Lady Star of the Sea in Porthcawl and St Joseph's of Arimathea in Pyle.

The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 80%, 15% of pupils are from other Christian denominations, 1% from other world religions and 4% of pupils have no religious affiliation. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10% in all classes across the school.

The school admits pupils from ages 3 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 256. Approximately 10% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average. The school identifies around 15% of pupils as having additional learning needs; this is slightly lower than the national average. Around 43% of pupils are from an ethnic minority background, the majority being of Polish or Filipino origin. Overall, pupils come from at least 14 different ethnic groups speaking 10 different home languages. Approximately 41% of pupils receive support in English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh as a first language at home.

Pupils are taught in 9 classes, 5 of which are mixed age groups; the Nursery class offers full-time places to children. The school is staffed by 8 full time teachers and 2 part time teachers 80% of whom are Catholic with 33% having completed the CCRS. 70% of support staff are Catholic, 9% having completed the CAREC course.

The current headteacher took up his post in September 2008. In September 2017 he became the interim headteacher of St Peter's Catholic Primary School in Cardiff. The deputy headteacher, who is also the Religious Education co-ordinator took up her role of acting headteacher at St Mary's on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017.

Since the school's last inspection, staff changes include two new teachers, a new chair of the governing body and a new link governor for Religious Education. The school enjoys close links with St Mary's Church and benefits greatly from the chaplaincy work undertaken by the parish priest.

In 2014 the school was recognised an 'Advanced Thinking School' by the University of Exeter which described the work of the school as "a shining example of cognitive development." In addition, in 2014 the Welsh Government recognised St Mary's as a Lead Practitioner School and began using its work as an exemplar case study of good practice. In 2015 – 2016, the Governing Body received the Governor's Wales Quality mark Bronze Award. St Mary's is currently a Category A (green) school. The school has achieved multiple Healthy Schools Awards and in December 2015 received the Eco Schools Platinum

Award. In 2016, St Mary's began its work as a Pioneer School contributing to the development of the new curriculum for Wales.

The school accommodation provides a stimulating learning environment for pupils. Pupils enjoy using the new library and computing suite and new external doors in each classroom provide access to attractive grounds enabling high quality outdoor learning activities to take place.

The school has recently celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Archbishop Stack visited to bless the mural at the school entrance and the school received a papal blessing.

The school has identified the following areas for development in its religious education provision in 2017 – 2018:

- Ensure that when commenting on their learning and setting personal targets, all children focus on developing their Religious Education skills rather than literacy ones.
- Ensure that different tasks (rather than the same or similar task supported by an adult) are planned for higher and lower attainers consistently in all classes.
- To investigate innovative ways to assess pupils' core knowledge as they progress through the school.
- To share the excellent practice in Religious Education teaching identified in MER, across the school.

<b>Summary</b>
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<b>How effective is the school in providing Catholic education?</b>	<b>Good</b>
<p>Catholic education at St Mary's is <b>good</b> because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A very strong Catholic ethos permeates all aspects of school life.</li> <li>• The quality of teaching in Religious Education is consistently good.</li> <li>• Prayer and worship effectively promote pupils' spiritual and moral development, and their ability to recite prayers in English and Welsh is impressive.</li> <li>• The behaviour of pupils is excellent.</li> <li>• The well-informed governing body is fully involved in the life of the school and provides appropriate levels of support and challenge to the leadership team.</li> <li>• Leaders and managers demonstrate high levels of commitment to their roles in the mission of the Church and education.</li> </ul>	

**What are the school's prospects for improvement?**

**Excellent**

The school's prospects for improvement are **excellent** because:

- The motivated and hardworking head teacher and Religious Education subject leader communicate high expectations to staff about securing improvement and are pro-active in moving the school forward.
- The focus on the development of progressive pedagogy at St Mary's is having a positive impact on the quality of learning and teaching and raising standards in classroom Religious Education.
- The children enjoy Religious Education and are hardworking and motivated to achieve their very best.
- The regular contributions made to pupils' learning by the parish priest are further building upon the already excellent links between the school and Parish.
- The active involvement of the Religious Education link governor and Religious Education committee in the life of the school ensures that the governing body is fully informed about the religious life of the school. This enables governors to provide appropriate levels of support and challenge for the continued development of high quality Religious Education.

### **Recommendations and Required Actions**

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

**R1:** To further develop end-of-Foundation Phase teacher assessment processes for Religious Education to ensure that the tasks set and the response from more able pupils matches the criteria for the average level +1.

**R2:** To ensure that ICT tasks improve and enhance knowledge, skills and understanding in Religious Education.

**R3:** To produce a plan which ensures that the excellent practice identified during The inspection is disseminated effectively across the school.

### **What happens next?**

The school will submit a Post-Inspection Action Plan to the Director of Religious Education that shows how it will address the recommendations. Submission should be within 45 working days of publication of the report. Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by the Archdiocese.

## **Main Findings**

<b>KQ1. How good are outcomes?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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Outcomes for most pupils are at least good. Nearly all pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons, believing that they help them to learn about scripture, their faith and building a relationship with God.

Evidence from pupils' books shows that teachers challenge pupils in their religious thinking, developing their religious literacy and their understanding of beliefs and practices. Most pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the teachings of the Church.

Most pupils start school with knowledge and skills which are typical for their age. Pupils in the Foundation Phase make very good progress from their starting points identified by the school's Religious Education baseline. The school's tracking system shows that nearly all pupils make expected progress in their attainment in Religious Education and a minority make accelerated progress, achieving very high standards at the end of Key Stage 2. The presentation of most pupils' work is good and it is excellent for a minority. Pupils' written and creative responses to activities selected from the Come and See programme indicate that the knowledge, skills and understanding of most in Religious Education is at least good.

In lessons observed, many pupils used a range of religious language appropriate to their age, that was above expectation in some instances. Pupils in the Foundation Phase demonstrated knowledge of the signs and symbols of Baptism and pupils in the Reception class enjoyed role-playing the Baptism of a baby. Where lesson outcomes were excellent, pupils identified sources of religious belief and explained how distinctive religious beliefs arise, for instance when reading from scripture, appraising religious artworks and interviewing key witnesses.

Self and peer assessment activities are effective at encouraging children to reflect on their response to tasks. They are used well throughout the school.

Nearly all pupils engage in and respect the Catholic mission and values of the school. The school Senedd enables pupils to express their views and make improvements to the school. They are proud of their contribution to the mural that celebrates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school. Pastoral care systems are very strong and the 'playground peacemaker' system is popular with pupils. As a result of the school's very strong Catholic ethos, based upon Gospel values, nearly all pupils display excellent behaviour. Pupils have an understanding of and commitment to the Common Good and they pupils are deeply proud of their fund-raising activities.

Pupils are alert to the needs of others. They recognise their roles in seeking justice for pupils in the school and globally and spoke enthusiastically about their

work for charities such as Mission Together. Pupils are aware of the need to care for the wider community and through the profits made in their successful participation in the 'Young Dragons' business project. They purchased items for the Bridgend Food Bank.

Acts of worship engage nearly all pupils. Pupils act with reverence and respect when saying prayers, both formal and informal. They know and understand a range of traditional prayers and their ability to recite prayers in English and Welsh during collective worship is impressive. In adult-led acts of worship, nearly all pupils display reverence and respect. They are able to listen attentively and reflect on scripture.

Year 6 pupils benefit from an annual retreat led by the Religious Education link-governor. Retreat activities, including the appreciation of religious art, add value to the standards achieved within curriculum Religious Education at the end of Key Stage 2.

The school grounds are used effectively by the youngest children in the foundation phase to develop their spirituality. Pupils' ability to contribute to their own and others' spiritual development is being nurtured through the opportunities provided for them to plan and lead worship.

Most pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the liturgical year and Catholic seasons and understand the concepts and characteristics of being a Christian. This is enhanced by the innovative 'St Mary's Pupil Profile' that was developed as a collaboration of the pupil Senedd and the whole school community.

There are excellent links between the school and parish. Pupils benefit greatly from regular visits by the Parish Priest, who participates in and enhances their learning.

<b>KQ2. How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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Teaching is consistently good with a few examples of adequate and excellent lessons, resulting in nearly all pupils making good progress and achieving well over time.

Teachers generally display a passion and enthusiasm for teaching Religious Education. They have strong subject knowledge and employ a range of teaching styles and strategies. In the best practice observed, teachers have high expectations of their pupils, they build effectively on previous learning, ask open-ended questions, have exciting, creative lesson starters, clear success criteria, and ensure that the lesson moves at an appropriate pace. They use effective strategies to engage pupils in their learning. The role of other adults in the lesson was notable and particularly effective for younger pupils and those with additional needs. In lessons where teaching is not so effective, pupils lose concentration due to extended exposition by the teacher, too much time being spent on computing skills at the expense of developing learning in Religious Education, and learning objectives not being sufficiently linked to the tasks set.

Teachers across the school plan activities, which enable pupils to work independently and collaboratively. Carefully planned tasks capture pupils's interest and enthusiasm. Good use is made of the external environment to develop and consolidate learning. Lessons observed during the inspection included 'Baptism symbol treasure hunts' in the school grounds and church building in preparation for a Baptism, role-playing a Baptism ceremony, designing Baptism candles and making flow, bridge and brace maps teaching about Baptism these activities enabled nearly all pupils in the Foundation Phase to have a sound knowledge of the symbols used and an age appropriate understanding of a Baptism ceremony in the Catholic Church.

In Key Stage 2, planned tasks enable pupils to examine the theme of Mission, undertake research about the lives of Gladys Aylward, St Teresa of Kolkata, Sean Devereaux, and reflect upon how the love that these people showed towards others made a difference to their lives. Pupils use iPads to record role-play interviews with apostles articulating their knowledge of the qualities that apostles may need to be "chosen." Fast-paced debates encouraged pupils to develop skills gathering information from a range of sources, including the scriptures, to articulate and justify their viewpoints.

The school places great emphasis on training staff in the development of progressive pedagogy in order to enhance learning and teaching. Learning tools eg 'Thinking Maps', 'Thinking hats', techniques to "build learning power" and Bloom's taxonomy are all used regularly by teachers to introduce or reinforce teaching points effectively and by pupils to develop thinking and record responses to tasks set. These learning tools are used to good effect and equip pupils and staff with strategies to promote and further extend their learning. Teaching approaches that promote cognitive development are well embedded throughout the school and are having a positive impact on standards in Religious Education.

Assessment in Religious Education follows Archdiocesan guidelines. NBRIA levels of attainment are used to assess pupil outcomes and tracking of individual pupil progress informs teachers planning. The school is currently developing an innovative approach to assessment using multiple-choice questions. This development, which is in the early stages, aims to provide formative assessment information for teachers. The school has also developed a nursery baseline assessment, which establishes pupils' levels of religious literacy. Recent Archdiocesan initiatives inform practice at the school. The introduction of a school pupil profile has been particularly successful in its implementation, enabling staff, members of the Governing Body, and pupils to work together to highlight the aspirations that the whole school community shares for the pupils at St Mary's. Pupils have translated the profile into child friendly language in both the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2. Regular reference to and reflection on the profile contributes well to the development of pupils' spiritual needs. This approach, based on the Jesuit pupil profile, is effective in that staff, governors and pupils have ownership and a shared understanding of their profile and work to fulfil the aspirations expressed.

The school seeks to support pupil wellbeing through an effective pastoral care programme. The Family Engagement Officer and Emotional Literacy Support available for pupils are having a positive impact on pupil wellbeing. Sex Education is delivered in Upper Key Stage 2 using the “All that I am” programme.

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school and the school day offers many opportunities for personal and collective prayer. Nearly all pupils take part in daily meditation and have opportunities to participate in class prayer, liturgies, reconciliation services, rosary clubs and assemblies. Pupils also enjoy planning and leading class “Gweddiwn.” In addition to many displays throughout the school reminding the community that they are in a Catholic school in Wales, each classroom has a prayer focus area. These are attractive; they reflect the liturgical year and the current Religious Education theme. Prayers written by pupils are shared in class prayer time or Religious Education lessons. The assemblies that took place during the week of inspection were well organised and presented offering prayerful and joyous reflections on the theme of loving God and others. Pupils are aware that prayer is communicating with God. They pray in both English and Welsh, are respectful and reflective during quiet prayer and participate joyfully and enthusiastically with singing, when saying the school psalm and when leading prayers. Mass is celebrated regularly during the school year. Regular Family Masses organised by the school and celebrated in the parish on Sundays further develop the already strong links with St Mary’s Parish Church.

The Religious Education curriculum and the wider life of the school meet the needs of pupils. The school uses the ‘*Come and See*’ Religious Education scheme of work. The Religious Education curriculum matches the full range of pupils’ needs and ensures continuity and progression in their learning. It enables pupils to grow in their experience, knowledge and understanding of the beliefs, practices and rich tradition of the Catholic Church and to enhance and develop their spiritual life journey. Pupils also study other world religions including Judaism. Religious Education is well resourced. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the requirements of the Bishops’ Conference in all respects. Attendance at Archdiocesan training, cluster training and transition events at Archbishop M<sup>c</sup>Grath Catholic High School enable staff to moderate levels of attainment. This practice is having a positive impact on standards in most classes across the school and especially at the end of Key Stage 2. However’ there was insufficient evidence to support the number of pupils achieving average level +1 at the end of the Foundation Phase.

As a Platinum Eco School, pupils are very keen to share their ideas on sustainable living and care for the planet. The school provides numerous opportunities to teach pupils the importance of recycling, saving energy, the importance of bees in our world and growing produce. Links with Iceland and France support the development of Global Citizenship. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities eg coding club, a range of sports clubs and French Club. These clubs enrich pupil’s education and offer valuable opportunities to develop new skills.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to reflect on the impact of Religious Education teaching on their own lives; this is evident in pupil behaviour

across the school, which is very good and in pupils' care and concern for those in the wider world, as expressed through their active support for CAFOD and other global charities. Pupils are proud of their school and its grounds and talk with enthusiasm of their outdoor prayer area; Papal blessing and new mural designed to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school and blessed by Archbishop Stack.

<b>KQ3. How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
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The school's leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. This is evident in every aspect of the school's work: from the displays in the entrance, pupils' attitudes towards prayer and worship, the excellent relationships between all groups within the school. and the persistent search by school leaders for ways to improve the school for the benefit of all pupils.

The Headteacher has a clear vision for Religious Education and provides strong and effective leadership. He works closely with the Leader for Religious Education who is also committed to ensuring that the Catholicity permeates all areas of school life.

All leaders, including the Governing Body, work in partnership to promote the Catholic life of the school. A structured programme of monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education takes place at the school. The Headteacher and curriculum leader undertake book scrutiny, lesson observation, listening to learners and observation of collective worship. Findings are discussed with the Senior Leadership Team. These activities ensure that all leaders have a sound insight into practice across the school and are therefore able to contribute effectively to improvement planning.

The parish priest makes a highly significant contribution to the life of the school as a Catholic community. He is a frequent visitor ensuring a strong link between the parish and school.

Governors are actively involved in their role of support and challenge. Regular written reports from the curriculum leader ensure that the governing body receives an insight into standards across the school. Its involvement with the school staff and pupils in the development of the pupil profile signifies a shared vision for the school.

The Religious Education committee work with the curriculum leader to monitor, evaluate and review progress in Religious Education. They conduct 'Learning Walks' and are conversant with the school's data analysis, improvement plan and pupil progress. They share their observations and conclusions with the whole governing body. The link governor for Religious Education plays an active role in the life of the school by leading retreats. Upper Key Stage 2 Pupils have produced impressive extended written responses interpreting religious paintings because of her work in this area.

Pupils are happy at the school and speak proudly of the friendships they enjoy at the school. The Senedd and roles eg Playground Peacemakers encourage pupils

to play an active part in supporting the aims of the school. They understand how the school's mission is reflected in their behaviour and their lives.

There is a very strong sense of belonging in the school and the inclusion of all is a shared vision that is articulated clearly by staff members and pupils in the school's Senedd. The strong provision for prayer and worship and Religious Education makes a positive impact on the relationships between pupils. They are proud of the ethnic and cultural diversity that exists within the school and speak confidently about the importance of love and forgiveness.

The school places a high value on the involvement of parents in their children's education and provides regular opportunities for them to view children's work. Parents are welcomed to Masses and liturgies at the school, praise the school for its Catholic values, wonderful nurturing environment, strong sense of faith, and close links with the Church.

Views expressed by parents and children in response to questionnaires help to inform future developments in the school community. Parents value the termly RE newsletter and appreciate their participation in the liturgical life of the school through their attendance at Masses and assemblies.

Leaders and managers provide systems and structures to develop community cohesion and the school participates in a range of community projects, including the 'Tree of Light' celebrations with the Lions Club of Bridgend. It joins the Bridgend Male Voice Choir at their annual Christmas Carol concert.

There are frequent opportunities for pupils to take part in fundraising and awareness-raising initiatives, such as the CAFOD 'Brighten up Harvest' appeal, which are very effective in helping pupils to learn about the Catholic teachings on the Common Good and the preferential option for the poor. The school operates a very successful Credit Union scheme, through which pupils are able to talk about the importance of personal financial management and the dangers of profligacy.

The school has very strong links with Archbishop McGrath High School and there are effective transition arrangements in place, including cluster INSET days, curriculum projects and the 'Helping Hands' wellbeing project.

The school enjoys an excellent reputation within the community and pupils and staff members are very proud of their school.

## Appendix 1

### Responses to parent questionnaires

108 parental responses were received from parents. Nearly all were positive and supportive of the work of the school.

Parents stated that children at St Mary's learn and understand about religion and how to apply it in their daily lives. They feel that its distinctive, faith centered ethos enables their children to flourish, stating that the school offers a wonderful nurturing environment and helps to develop a strong sense of faith. The school promotes close links with the church and places great emphasis on Catholic values and good morals. Parents praise the strong links with the local parish church.

Parents feel that the school has a distinctive ethos - it feels like "one Catholic family." Catholic values permeate the curriculum; they are pleased that the school is culturally diverse enabling pupils to prepare for their future in modern Britain. They also comment, "The staff are fabulous, nothing is ever too much and they have helped my children to grow individually."

## Appendix 2

### Evidence Base

- The school's Improvement Plan, Self- Evaluation Report and other relevant documentation
- Meeting with the Religious Education Leader
- Meeting with the link governor for Religious Education and the Religious Education Committee
- Meeting with the parish priest
- Meetings with the headteacher and deputy head teacher
- Meeting with parents
- Meetings with the Family Engagement Officer
- Discussions with the School Senedd
- Attendance at whole school and class-based meditation.
- Lesson observations
- Scrutiny of planning and assessment
- Scrutiny of pupils' work
- Scrutiny of prayer foci and displays.
- Scrutiny of the range of portfolios provided and recordings of previous pupil led assemblies
- Discussion with pupils
- Parent questionnaires
- Observation of daily routines