



## Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 141489

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham on:

Date: 29-30 June 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	<b>2</b>
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Collective worship (p.7) The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....	1
The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

### Summary of key findings

#### What the school does well

- All stakeholders understand its Catholic mission, which underpins the community's work.
- Passion for Catholic social teaching is evident throughout the school and is exemplified by all who live out the faith through practical actions.
- Leaders strongly emphasise prayer and liturgy across the school and provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils.
- Monitoring and evaluation are rigorous, effective, and undertaken regularly to accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for further development.
- Staff are committed to teaching religious education well and have secure subject knowledge, enabling them to do so.

What the school needs to improve:

- Develop strategies to ensure all pupils understand how well they are achieving in religious education and what they need to do to improve.
- Ensure questioning in religious education lessons engages all pupils and provides additional challenge by promoting higher-order thinking opportunities.
- Provide pupils with further opportunities to express individuality and creativity in the presentation of their religious education work.

## 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:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

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

1

### Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school .....

1

### Leadership

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

1



The school's mission statement, 'Learn from Jesus, love like Jesus and trust in Jesus', permeates everything within the school community. Pupils have a secure understanding of its meaning, telling inspectors, 'It means we always think before we do something - would Jesus do this?' Catholic social teachings, such as caring for our common home, are well-embedded across the school and are used to promote the common good and put faith into action. Consequently, pupils are keen to support each other and those less fortunate than themselves beyond the school and know why it is important to do so in a Catholic community. They clearly understand the value each person has as a creation of God. Leaders, staff, and pupils are truly committed to the meaning behind the mission, and their unequivocal aim is to live out the faith through practical actions. Pupils believe 'Faith without action isn't really faith at all.' Because staff support and encourage them effectively, pupils seek opportunities to lead by example and enjoy roles such as Mini Vinnies and Caritas Ambassadors, where they can initiate and lead outreach and chaplaincy-based activities, allowing them to support others locally and nationally. This is seen, for example, through entirely pupil-led projects, such as supporting the local baby bank.

Christ is consciously at the centre of the school's aims and ethos, ensuring its work to help others, particularly those who need additional support, is exemplary. Leaders, staff, and pupils readily articulate how they help others by ensuring the school is a welcoming and fully inclusive community. Staff are exemplary role models for pupils, encouraging them to bear witness to the school's mission and be good disciples of Christ; staff embrace it fully. This is especially evident in pupils' understanding of Jesus' universal love and the need for them to show this, too, as His followers. Pupils clearly understand they must always accept and love each other; this belief is further reflected in how the Caritas Ambassadors consider how they can help refugees, climate change, and social justice issues. The school's physical environment is well cared for and is an excellent

witness to its mission. Spaces such as the Marian Garden, class prayer areas, and reflection area in the entrance hall effectively promote the school's Catholic ethos. The exceptionally welcoming culture that runs throughout the school results in a sense of inclusivity, where everyone is valued. Staff work hard to ensure that all pupils are included in every aspect of the school's work and that their achievements are celebrated, for example, in the weekly gifts from God assembly.

Governors and leaders are inspirational in their witness to Catholic social teaching. Consequently, its principles are present across the curriculum and in all school activities. All staff work together to ensure the entire curriculum reflects a Catholic understanding of reality. Governors and staff evaluate Catholic life regularly; subsequently, they have a strong and current understanding of the school's strengths in this area and know the next steps to take to further build on these. Therefore, the school constantly seeks to develop its provision and governors are ambitious in their aspirations to enable the school to live out its mission actively. Pupils contribute systematically to the evaluation of Catholic life. For example, pupil faith leaders regularly monitor the school environment and are rightly proud of the improvements they have initiated in the school hall. Because of this approach to evaluation, leaders can be confident that their evaluations are accurate. Staff are well supported in understanding the school's Catholic life and value the training they receive from leaders and external providers. It is frequent and effective in providing support and ideas for further improvements.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

### Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

### Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their religious education lessons and work with engagement and enthusiasm. One pupil described religious education lessons as ‘unlocking a whole new adventure!’ Subsequently, progress across the school is generally good, with attainment being at least in line with that for other core subjects for most groups of pupils as they know more and can do more over time. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) make good progress in individual lessons and meet the expectations set for them. However, this is not yet seen in the overall attainment data for the subject. Pupils take pride in presenting their work in religious education and work independently to complete the tasks set. There are some examples of emerging individuality and creativity within pupils’ responses to tasks, but this is not yet embedded across the school. Pupils are religiously literate and consequently can articulate how their learning in religious education affects their actions in their everyday lives. They can discuss what they have learned within a lesson confidently but are less fluent when discussing their learning journey over time because they do not always remember what they have previously learnt.

Teachers’ strong subject knowledge and commitment to the subject ensure that lessons are generally linked to pupils’ current knowledge and what they need to learn next. Pupils can use the feedback provided by their teacher to articulate how well they have achieved in an individual lesson. However, they cannot consistently articulate what they need to do to improve their learning over a series of lessons or unit of work because this is unclear to them. Teachers generally use questioning in religious education lessons well; it allows them to identify what pupils know and use this to adapt the next step in their teaching. However, questions are not sufficiently targeted to maximise learning for all pupils, including those with higher prior attainment. Teachers provide a range of tasks, including sequencing, art, storyboards, and drama, though these can sometimes be too heavily structured. Teachers also ensure sufficient time for reflection, which provides opportunities for pupils to reflect morally to consider how Jesus’ teachings might affect their actions. Pupils cherish

such opportunities because they know teachers value their opinions. Teachers celebrate pupils' work in lessons and through a weekly assembly, meaning pupils feel optimistic and enthusiastic about their learning and aspire to achieve well in religious education.

Leaders and governors ensure that religious education is a priority within the school, as seen in homework expectations, reports to parents, and links to other curriculum areas. Their commitment ensures pupils benefit from a well-sequenced curriculum as they progress through the school. The subject leader is inspirational in her vision and passion for religious education and provides staff with regular, high-quality support and training. Rigorously thorough monitoring of religious education ensures that leaders are well-placed to take any appropriate action to develop the subject further. Leaders provide feedback to teachers which is both practical and well-received; consequently, the needs of most pupils are met. However, the challenge for pupils with high prior attainment is inconsistent across classrooms. Excellent links are in place with the parish priest and St Vincent de Paul Society; these enhance the religious education curriculum across the school. The expertise of leaders at St Mary's has been used in schools throughout the multi-academy company (MAC), to the advantage of pupils in other schools.

## Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

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

1

### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school .....

1

### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship .....

1

Pupils are highly knowledgeable about prayer and liturgy and are very reverent in their prayerful responses. Consequently, they engage fully in a wide range of experiences. Pupils know that 'prayer is important because it brings us closer to God and unites us as followers of Jesus'. Pupils' singing is particularly joyful and a strong indicator of their enjoyment of worship; it is inspirational to hear. Due to the support they receive from leaders and staff, pupils are willing to undertake different liturgical ministries and feel proud to lead their class in prayer and liturgy, which happens weekly. The pupil faith leaders support their peers in prayer and are proud of their vocation to this role; consequently, pupils lead prayer willingly and confidently. Traditional Catholic prayers and liturgical seasons are well-known by pupils at age-appropriate levels. They can reflect theologically about what they pray and so can articulate how prayer is important to them. For example, pupils know prayer is important for 'listening' to what God tells them because simply 'hearing' about God isn't enough.

Prayer and liturgy are the school's priority and are central to its planning; daily and seasonal celebrations are clearly identified and rooted in prayer. Prayer is naturally embedded across the school and pupils understand that alongside the more formal times for prayer. They can also pray independently at other times, such as in the Marian Garden dedicated to their school patron or at their class prayer tables. Because of the wealth of opportunities available, there is a creative balance between routine and innovative prayer times. Pupils especially appreciate the opportunities they are given for spontaneous times of prayer. Staff are well-skilled in leading prayer and liturgy and act as positive role models, resulting in pupils becoming skilled in leading each other. This results in prayer that is consistently planned per the Church's usual customs and practices. The Word of God is central to worship at St Mary's, and scripture is always carefully chosen to reflect the Church's cycle of seasons and feasts. A dedicated sacred space in the entrance hall has been created for spontaneous prayer times. Whilst pupils like using this space, they would appreciate additional

spaces for this purpose around the school. Links with the parish are further supporting pupils to participate fully in the liturgy of the Church with monthly Sunday Mass, where pupils lead the readings for parishioners. Parents are thoughtfully involved in the school's prayer life.

The school's policy for prayer fully reflects the vision of leaders that it is central to the life of the school. It is accessible to staff and shows that leaders are ambitious to develop pupils' skills at different stages throughout the school. Staff appreciate the training they receive in prayer and liturgy, and staff subsequently use what they have learnt to support the pupils' and their spiritual formation. Leaders are ambitious to ensure that all staff lead prayer in an effective, authentically Catholic way so that all staff, including those only at the school for a short time or those early in their career, do so. The monitoring and evaluation of prayer and liturgy is rigorous and is the responsibility of all stakeholders. Strategies utilised by leaders and governors ensure that strengths and areas for development are identified and analysed accurately, leading to further improvements.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	141489
Full postal address of the school	Mill Street, Brierley Hill, DY5 2TH
School phone number	01384 985005
Name of head teacher or principal	Isabel Borriello
Chair of governing board	Joanna Griffin
School Website	st-mary-bh.sch.life
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Emmaus Catholic MAC
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Michelle Walsh

Lead inspector

Vivien McDonald

Team inspector

## 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