

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 401646

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

03–04 April 2025

## 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

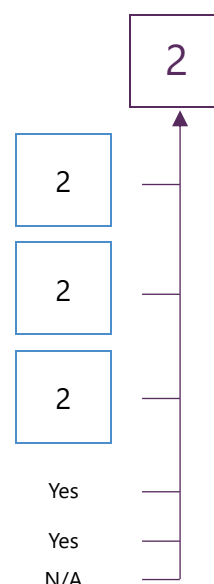
#### Collective worship (p.7)

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 is compliant in relation to the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference. For example, religious education is a core subject in the curriculum and is accorded the same academic rigour as other core subjects.
- The school has complied in relation to any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop, for example, by embedding the use of the Catholic Pupil Profile programme and fulfilling the requirement of relationships, and sexuality education (RSE).
- The expectations, in relation to the previous inspection's recommendations, are not applicable due to time passed since it was conducted.

## What the school does well

- The recently reviewed mission statement is relevant, known, and lived out by the whole community and underpins all areas of school life.
- The school has a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive ethos, ensuring everyone within its multi-faith community is valued and respected for who they are.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of Catholic social teaching, which promotes their knowledge of the needs of others within school, locally, and beyond.
- The school engages very well with the diocese and the local cluster of Catholic schools and uses these opportunities to develop a shared understanding of ways to implement the *Religious Education Directory*.
- Pupils are reverent, attentive, and respectful during acts of prayer and liturgy.

## What the school needs to improve

- Improve teaching by developing an ambitious, shared pedagogy in religious education (RE) to provide an enriched, engaging curriculum that develops collaboration, independence, and extends learning.
- Continue to develop prayer and liturgy throughout the school to enable pupils to plan child-led collective worship independently of adults.
- Continue to develop and implement the planning and assessment of the *Religious Education Directory*.

## 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

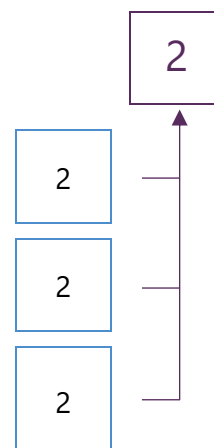
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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



St Mary's school is a welcoming, fully inclusive, nurturing community. The mission statement is known by the whole community and is the cornerstone that shapes the Catholic life of the school. Pupils know and understand the school's mission statement. One pupil stated that, on Mission Day, 'we have time to reflect on its meaning and how we live it in our daily lives'. Pupils are proud to belong to this school and clearly express that they feel valued, safe, and know they are part of a Catholic faith-filled community. They understand that each person is unique, created and loved by God. This was evident in relationships in the classroom, on the playground, and in the newly established 'Hive' provision, which supports vulnerable learners. Priority given to Catholic social teaching means that pupils have a clear understanding of how the school teaches them to follow the teachings of Jesus, giving them opportunities to grow in virtue and to be the best that they can be. 'Ysgol Senedd' groups understand the need to work for the common good. The Minnie Vinnies stated that they follow in Jesus' footsteps, supporting people locally at the parish foodbank, and globally by fundraising to provide water for a school in Kano and taking part in the Cafod Big Lent Walk.

A strong sense of belonging permeates all connected to the school. Staff, led by the committed head teacher, stated that they 'feel supported and proud to be a part of the school family' and that they work as a team to create a spiritual, nurturing, and happy environment for everyone. Teaching assistants support and enhance the emotional welfare of pupils, providing help and strategies to cope with life's challenges. The 'Hive' support programme is well planned and delivered; it effectively promotes the well-being of pupils. The environment is clearly Catholic in nature. The virtues of the school's Pupil Profile are woven into all aspects of school life, promoting, for example, how to be attentive and discerning. The school's work to develop pupils' moral and spiritual development is good. There are long-established parish links, and the parish priest is keen to develop a visible presence of the school in the parish community. The parish volunteers clearly enjoy working with the

school and stated it was an 'honour and a privilege' to do so. Their contributions are valuable and valued. The provision for RSE is carefully planned and meets all statutory and diocesan requirements.

Leaders and governors clearly articulate the mission of the school and are committed to developing, supporting, and nurturing its Catholic nature. The head teacher is ably supported by the deputy head teacher, and both are driven by their own personal faith, ensuring that the Catholic life of the school underpins all policies and decisions. Newly appointed staff are well supported by senior leaders and the RE link governor and, regardless of their faith backgrounds, are fully committed to the Catholic ethos of the school. Staff place great value on the training and support they receive. The induction programme for new staff is carefully planned and monitored to enable a greater understanding of the school's Catholic life and mission. Self-evaluation of the Catholic life of the school is honest, clearly planned for, and systematic and it includes the views of all stakeholders and pupils. Planned improvements, following analysis, are outlined in the school improvement plan, and governors ensure that the school's provision continues to improve. Governors are fully committed and skilled in their work and offer effective challenge and support. Parents are recognised as the first educators of the children. Leaders and governors communicate effectively with them, extending the culture of welcome to all.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

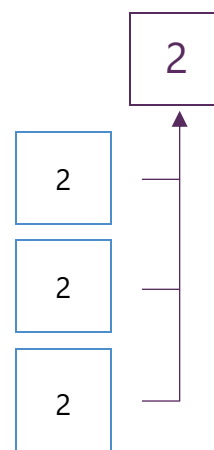
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



The implementation of the *Religious Education Directory* is in its early stages and pupils are becoming more secure in their knowledge and skills. They know more and remember more because of a well-planned curriculum for RE. In the best lessons observed pupils were able to connect their current learning to their previous knowledge and had good recall. Progression Step 1 pupils describe the 'Last Supper' as a special meal where Jesus broke bread, and even Nursery pupils are introduced to key religious concepts and vocabulary. This is built upon throughout the school. Pupils were developing their understanding of the Easter story, using religious symbolism and vocabulary appropriately, and class continuous provision was enhanced with imaginative Easter activities that reinforced learning. Most pupils in Progression Steps 2 and 3 were able to speak confidently, showing an understanding of key themes using subject-specific vocabulary. This is reinforced during lessons to meet the needs of the 46% of pupils with English as an additional language. Standards in books are comparable with literacy, and presentation is generally good, indicating that outcomes are in line with that of other core areas. However, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to learn independently and think for themselves. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good.

Recent developments to teaching and learning through cluster planning and working have been embraced; staff are developing their use of the scheme and its resources. This planning is having a positive impact on standards but is in the early stages of implementation. Teachers are becoming skilled at asking various questions to aid learning. Most teachers encourage 'pair and share' as a retrieval technique in lessons, which deepens pupils' understanding of their faith. It gives them time to reflect on their knowledge, which has led to good progress. There is evidence of differentiation, and approaches to marking and feedback are primarily helpful, but there needs to be consistency across the school to enable pupils to understand how well they are doing. Teaching overall is good. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to present their work using a variety of forms, and key

themes from the Directory are embedded into the Curriculum for Wales through a Catholic lens. This is particularly evident in the high-quality creative work linked to the Branch 'Desert to Garden' on display. Pupils with additional needs are very well supported. Inclusion is a real strength at St Mary's.

Leaders and governors ensure that the curriculum fully meets the requirements of the Directory regarding the allocation of time and the resources given to its delivery, and they recognise that the school is on a journey of improvement. Senior leaders have engaged with the diocese and cluster working party to ensure ongoing curriculum development and quality of provision. The head teacher has a clear vision for RE and her experience and expertise is driving and securing improvement. She works tirelessly with the deputy head teacher to provide dedicated hands-on help and support for all staff, which seeks to improve the quality of staff planning, delivery, and learning outcomes. Staff new to the school, including teachers in the early stages of their careers, are provided with a well-planned programme of quality training. Staff recognise that leaders invest time and are committed to supporting them. Self-evaluation, informed by a robust and rigorous cycle of monitoring, evaluation, and review, is in place and developed to raise standards and outcomes for learners. Parents feel confident in the school's delivery of RE. They are well informed, and their questionnaire responses were overwhelmingly positive.

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

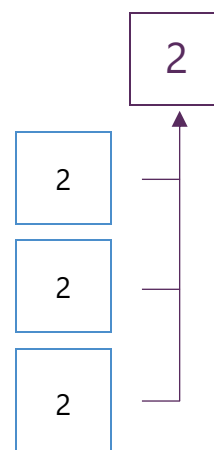
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

#### 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



Outcomes in collective worship are good. Pupils respond well to the range of experiences offered. They are reverent, attentive, and prayerful. During worship, pupils speak and read with confidence and clarity. Music and singing are used effectively to create a prayerful atmosphere. The range of collective worship observed was rich in symbolism and provided pupils with the opportunity to express themselves and demonstrate a good understanding of Lent and Easter. Pupils are happy to participate and they exhibit an age-appropriate degree of spiritual and emotional growth. Pupils spoke enthusiastically, for example, about 'Worship Monday'. This whole-school initiative is used effectively by staff to introduce key themes of the week and provide opportunity for further class-based liturgies, which allow time for pupils to reflect on the key Gospel messages. Older pupils, with support from adults, prepare engaging class liturgies. Pupils have a strong desire to be more actively engaged in planning, preparing, and delivering prayer and liturgy, particularly whole-school assemblies and child-led worship. This is an area for further development. Pupils pray traditional prayers confidently and can pray spontaneously for personal, local, and global needs. There is a good standard of Welsh language used in prayer, for example, the sign of the cross and responses.

The provision for acts of prayer and liturgy is good and includes routines of daily prayer, adult-led worship, and some pupil-led worship. Senior leaders are very good role models who capably guide pupils and less experienced staff in their planning and delivery of collective worship. The school environment effectively demonstrates its Catholic ethos. Attractive displays and the use of a range of artefacts, such as a Lenten Promise tree, enhance prayer times. Pupils are proud to belong to their school 'Houses'. They spoke about the qualities and lives of the people they were named after: Saints Cadoc, Kateri Tekakwitha, Josephine Bakhita, and Maximilian Kolbe. Well-considered prayer focal areas within classrooms are linked to the liturgical calendar. They are colourful and welcoming. They provide important focal points for the development of pupils' faith, and they are thoughtful in their content,

including scripture passages and relevant artefacts. Parents are invited to become involved in the spiritual life of their children. The school holds regular school/parish Masses and assemblies and is actively working in partnership with the parish church of St Mary of the Angels, where pupils participate by serving at the altar, reading, and singing as part of the choir.

The work of the senior leadership team in promoting, monitoring, and evaluating the provision for collective worship is good. An effective Prayer and Liturgy policy is in place. This has recently been reviewed and is adhered to by staff. The long-standing chair of governors and the experienced RE link governor have a clear understanding of the development needs of the school. They participate in formal monitoring activities and the RE link governor has supported recently appointed staff by delivering collective worship training. As a result of this, staff who are new to the school are developing their personal understanding of the importance of prayer and liturgy and are also very well supported to deliver effective opportunities for high-quality experiences of prayer and liturgy. School leaders work in partnership with the parish priest to offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation at key times, especially during the seasons of Lent and Advent. Leaders facilitate the preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion in conjunction with parish-based catechists. The leadership of collective worship at all levels enhances the distinctive nature of St Mary's School well.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	401646
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	6813330
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Wyndham Crescent, Canton, Cardiff, CF11 9EF
School phone number	02920225680
Headteacher	Claire Russell
Chair of governors	Robert Free
School Website	<a href="http://www.stmarysprm.cardiff.sch.uk">www.stmarysprm.cardiff.sch.uk</a>
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	16 –17 November 2015
Previous denominational inspection grade	AG

## The inspection team

Jacqueline Phillips  
Karen Lewis

Lead  
Team

## Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
<b>1</b>	Outstanding	Excellent
<b>2</b>	Good	Good
<b>3</b>	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
<b>4</b>	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement

