

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 103438

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Birmingham

04–05 June 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

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

2

Compliance statement

- This school fully complies with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- This school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of His Grace.
- This school has fully addressed all previous areas for improvement.

What the school does well

- A profound culture of welcome, inclusion, collaboration, and community is provided to everyone.
- Catholic life is the hallmark of the school, and the exceptionally Catholic physical environment enriches the faith life of all.
- Catholic social teaching is thoroughly integrated into all aspects of the curriculum and is truly lived out by the entire school community.
- Pupils are provided with excellent reflection and extension tasks in religious education Lessons, which enable them to deepen their faith.
- Pupils are very well supported in systematically developing their skills in planning, preparing, and leading prayer and liturgy.

What the school needs to improve

- Routinely involve pupils in the self-assessment of their work in religious education so that they know how to improve and can articulate how they have made progress.
- Appoint a dedicated subject leader for religious education to strengthen strategic direction and raise outcomes for all pupils. Ensure consistency in the provision of effective opportunities for prayerful silence and meditation, particularly during pupil-led classroom liturgies.
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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

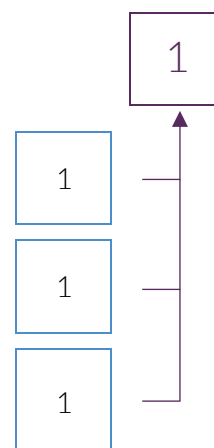
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 has an inclusive and welcoming Catholic culture, driven by its mission statement. Pupils articulate the mission well and thoroughly understand the essence of loving God above all things by using their God given talents to 'strive for excellence'. Pupils behave exceptionally well, and positive, respectful relationships exist between pupils and staff. Pupils are loved and cared for, and they enjoy all the varied opportunities that the school offers, enabling them to flourish. Pupils thrive as a result of the chaplaincy provision in school, undertaking a variety of roles, such as being members of the Cafod Club, the Spiritual and School Councils, and the Rights Respecting group. Pupils speak knowledgeably about how they respond to the demands of Catholic social teaching (CST). One pupil commented, 'CST is what we can do in our community, we have hope and take action'. This action is demonstrated in charity fundraising activities, such as supporting Cafod's Big Lent Walk, donating toiletries to the local food bank, helping people without housing, and raising funds for St Basil's and Father Hudson's Caritas, while also supporting refugees. A parent commented that 'Catholic Life at St Mary's is vibrant and inclusive. My children have had a wonderful experience and have been given numerous opportunities to explore their faith during their time at the school.'

The school welcomes students from diverse cultures and beliefs. One parent commented that the 'leadership is thoughtful and responsive about the way different faiths are embedded in the life of the school'; this is typical of other views expressed. All stakeholders readily articulate how they contribute to a welcoming and inclusive community, where everyone is valued. Leaders and staff are exemplary role models for pupils, encouraging them to bear witness to the school's mission and be good disciples of Christ. Staff frequently note that 'Christ is always at the heart of everything we do as a school'. The Catholic character of the school stands out in the beautiful

entrance area of the school and is evident throughout the school environment. Devotions to Our Lady, the Grotto, the use of religious artefacts, pupils work on *Building the Kingdom* themes, Catholic social teaching, prayers and reflections, along with high-quality classroom prayer areas embody the Catholic ethos of the school. The provision for relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) is carefully planned, and pupils are thoroughly articulate and knowledgeable about their learning.

Leaders' and governors' ambitious aspirations and high expectations are reflected in both policy and practice. Governors are strong strategic partners offering support and challenge to leaders. The headteacher is passionate about serving the needs of the school community and has worked tirelessly to lead the school to excellence. The governors are highly committed to ensuring the school is at the heart of the parish. Strong relationships exist between the school and parish, and the parish priest is a regular visitor to the school, enhancing the faith life for all. Sacramental preparation is led by the parish and well supported by the school. The principles of CST underpin all aspects of the school curriculum, which is taught through a Catholic lens. CST is embedded in every aspect of school life, and the introduction of the 'Big Questions' has supported this further. Governors and leaders are meticulous in ensuring that staff receive high-quality training and induction so that the Catholic life and mission of the school are at the heart of all school activities and leaders' decision-making. The school maintains a positive relationship with the diocese, and staff members regularly receive training and support. Staff feedback indicates that they feel exceptionally valued and supported by leaders and governors.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

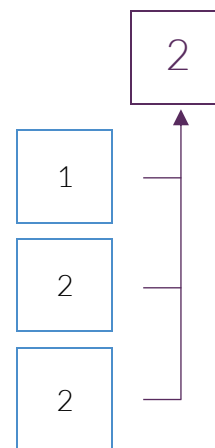
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Pupils enjoy their learning and develop excellent knowledge, understanding, and skills in their lessons. Subsequently, pupils make consistently good progress, and their learning reflects their increasing knowledge and skills over time. Pupils are religiously literate and can articulate how their learning affects their actions. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils demonstrated how the gifts of the Holy Spirit could help them in various scenarios in their everyday lives, with one pupil commenting that if they were having a heated argument with a friend, they would use the gift of right judgement to 'walk away from the situation' and use wisdom 'to know when to come back and talk to them when feeling calm'. Pupils actively engage in lessons, relish challenges and complete learning tasks with a high level of independence. The excitement of the pupils in Early Years recreating the Holy Spirit through dance was joyous. An array of individual, creative tasks is recorded in pupils' books as well as written examples. Learning is designed to enable pupils to recall knowledge at the beginning of the lessons and then discuss scripture, biblical stories, and accounts by responding to questions about what they have heard, leading to significant progress. Pupils' attainment of religious education over the last three years is comparable to other core subjects. Data analysis has improved, and precise analysis of the achievements of various pupil groups supports leaders in knowing their next steps.

Teachers demonstrate a deep commitment to religious education, and most have secure subject knowledge. A consistent approach to questioning is used well and effectively to support pupils in understanding scripture and biblical accounts. Alongside the recent introduction of 'deeper learning mats', pupils are supported in more complex and reflective thinking. For instance, during a lesson on Pentecost, a pupil in Year 3 recognised that the disciples were given a mission to spread the word of God in response to the question 'Why did the disciples become the apostles?' For some pupils, their work is celebrated in their books by teachers' responses to their

personalised extension tasks. These age-related tasks enable pupils to share their deeper responses about scripture, the Church's teachings and broader social issues. For example, a Year 6 task focused on how helping refugees enables you to love your neighbour as yourself. One pupil's response highlighted the virtues of kindness and compassion, the example of Jesus, the right to be listened to and taken seriously, and an acknowledgement of the plight of refugees. Pupils are knowledgeable and articulate, and they complete their learning tasks; however, they are not fully aware of the progress they are making or what they can do to improve further. Resources, including Bibles, are used effectively by staff and pupils.

Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum faithfully expresses the bishops' requirements. Subject content is carefully mapped to be effectively sequenced by building on prior learning. Effective links with the broader curriculum and the utilisation of a Catholic formation programme have embedded Catholic social teaching within religious education. Leaders have also ensured that the curriculum is fully accessible for those with additional needs. Religious education has full parity with other core subjects. The self-evaluation process ensures that pupils achieve good outcomes overall. Staff new to the school undergo a well-planned induction programme and receive support from mentors. Leaders also provide high-quality training utilising diocesan resources to keep staff current in their knowledge and skills. The headteacher and senior leaders currently share the responsibility for religious education and have a clear vision for teaching and learning. However, without the leadership of a dedicated subject leader, the capacity to support all staff and pupils securing good or better outcomes is affected.

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

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

1

A wide variety of experiences of prayer and liturgy engage the pupils at St Mary's. Pupils are respectful during prayer and liturgy, and most respond well because the activities are engaging and relevant to them. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the variety of Catholic ways of praying, including spontaneous prayer. Pupils discuss the types of prayer they use and confidently relate them to the Church's cycle of seasons and feasts, such as praying the Rosary in October and the Eternal Rest prayer in the month dedicated to the Holy Souls. There is a rhythm within the school that celebrates various aspects of Catholic prayer traditions. Pupils participate in all acts of prayer and listen attentively. Generally, an atmosphere conducive to prayer and listening to scripture is created. However, at times, prayerful silence and meditation are not present, particularly in prayers led by pupils in their classrooms. Pupils confidently use the processes of planning and evaluating prayer and think of ways to improve class prayer and liturgy.

Prayer is at the heart of the school's life. Prayers throughout the school day are seamlessly integrated into pupils' lives because of the staff's commitment, systematically modelled by leaders. Mass is celebrated regularly with the inspiring parish priest, who is a regular presence in the pupils' lives. During a Key Stage 1 Mass, the pupils participated wholeheartedly in the prayers and responses. Staff are skilled in supporting pupils in planning and leading prayer and liturgy following the four-part model of 'gather, listen, respond and go forth'. Pupils plan appropriate prayers, using scripture and liturgical music to enhance the quality of the liturgy. In some classroom-based times of extended prayer, pupils pray spontaneously with confidence. The Angelus is prayed at noon each day, and pupils regularly write prayers for various intentions; for example, for Marian devotions, Lent, the Jubilee year, and the inauguration of Pope Leo XIV. The school environment further enhances the prayer experience for pupils through the use of

appropriate displays and themes that align with the liturgical year in classrooms and communal areas. One parent commented that 'Our child has a well-developed Catholic understanding of the world and the importance of prayer and worship'.

Leaders and governors clearly understand how prayer and liturgy are the foundation of the school's mission and give it the highest priority. The school's policy for prayer and liturgy provides guidance and direction for all staff as it includes a progression of expectations appropriate to the age of pupils, resulting in a consistent experience for all. Prayer and liturgy are well-planned across the school, allowing the youngest pupils to build on their knowledge of different prayers as they progress through the school. Leaders and governors ensure a clear plan of events throughout the liturgical year to support each pupil's faith formation. The whole community is aware of the holy days of obligation and saints' days because leaders prioritise these. All staff understand the centrality of prayer, and leaders ensure that all staff are well supported to lead worship. School leaders provide regular training for all staff, which includes age-appropriate ideas to use in the classroom. Retreats are frequently offered and support the formation of pupils and staff, ensuring all are spiritually nourished and equipped to lead the school's faith life. The monitoring and review cycle by leaders and governors is prioritised and demonstrates the school's rapid improvements in prayer and liturgy.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	103438
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	330 3344
Full postal address of the school	Vivian Road, Harborne, Birmingham, B17 0DN
School phone number	0121 464 2141
Headteacher	Louise Yorke
Chair of governing board	Mary Higgins
School Website	www.stmaryrc.bham.sch.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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	May 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Krystyna Bickley
Gerry O'Hara

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