

# St Margaret's Catholic Primary School

URN: 401266

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

19–20 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

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

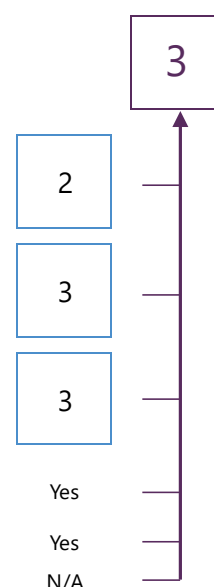
#### Collective worship (p.7)

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.
- The school is compliant in relation to any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- Due to the length of time that has lapsed since the last inspection, whether the school has fully complied in relation to responding to previous areas for improvement is not applicable.

## What the school does well

- St Margaret's Catholic Primary School is a caring, welcoming, and inclusive school community. Pupils are proud and happy to be part of the school; they feel safe and valued.
- All staff are positive role models who foster strong, nurturing relationships that promote a sense of belonging. Pastoral care is a strength of the school, with leaders and staff committed to meeting the needs of the community and providing responsive, inclusive support, particularly for the most vulnerable and those with additional learning needs.
- Pupils enjoy learning in religious education (RE) and speak enthusiastically about opportunities to explore Catholic social teaching in lessons, reflecting on how they can make a positive difference to others.
- Pupils in the oldest classes were proud to plan and willingly lead acts of worship for their peers with the 'gather, listen, respond and go forth' format.
- After a challenging period, the school now has a stable leadership team, which has a clear vision for moving the school forward.

## What the school needs to improve

- Secure consistently good or better teaching and learning across the school by improving pace, challenge, higher-order questioning, creativity, and individuality, while embedding effective assessment practices that ensure clarity on pupil progress and next steps. All teaching should faithfully reflect the knowledge lenses, ways of knowing, and expected outcomes in the *Religious Education Directory*.
- Strengthen the rigour of monitoring and evaluation of in all three inspection areas, ensuring meaningful involvement of all stakeholders, including pupils and governors, and that findings lead to clear, impactful action planning.
- Strengthen the school's prayer and liturgy by developing a clear annual plan, updating the Prayer and Liturgy Policy in line with the new Directory, and ensuring ongoing staff development and robust monitoring to support progression and pupil participation.

## 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

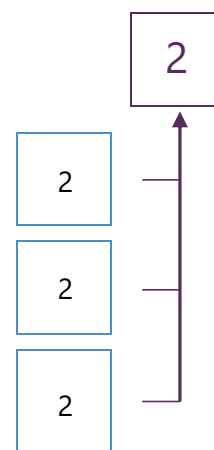
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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 Margaret's Catholic Primary School is a welcoming, fully inclusive, nurturing community. The mission statement, 'We are learning to live like Jesus', is visible around the school and is known by the whole school community. Pupils can express some ways that they live out the mission statement, through the care, kindness, and love they show for each other. The pupils at St Margaret's are proud to be pupils at the school. Behaviour in the majority of lessons and around the school is good. They show respect for themselves, each other, and the adults who support them. Pupils are happy, confident, and feel safe in school. Pupils have raised money for a number of good causes, such as the local foodbank during Harvest, and the Mini Vinnies group have led initiatives, such as writing Christmas cards to the elderly and promoting the Big Bocs Bwyd. However, pupils do not play a central role in the decision-making process related to these groups and, as a result, the impact of the groups is limited.

Staff are committed to their roles in implementing the school's mission statement. They take part enthusiastically in activities that reflect the life and mission of the school. For example, they participate fully in opportunities to raise money for those in need. Staff provide positive role models for pupils, and this supports the Catholic ethos of the school that has been established. This is shown by the way that all children are welcomed into school and by the particularly caring approach applied to those who are most vulnerable, including those pupils with additional learning needs. The school environment is welcoming and reflects its Catholic mission, and this is supported through a range of displays and artefacts found across the school, such as the St Margaret's display and classroom prayer tables. The school is beginning to embed the virtues of the Catholic Pupil Profile and the principles of Catholic social teaching to support the pupils' moral and spiritual development.

For example, the notion of being 'faith-filled and hopeful' is introduced, together with ways they can support the common good of all.

The executive head teacher, 'head of school', senior leaders, and governors are committed to the development of the Catholic life and mission of the school. Leaders ensure that all staff, including new staff, understand the school's mission and Catholic values. The school implements diocesan policies, such as the Catholic Pupil Profile, meditation, and Daily Examen, though these are in the early stages of being established within the curriculum. Policies are in place and provision for relationships and sexuality education (RSE) uses diocesan approved materials appropriately. Leaders and governors promote positive school-parish links and encourage families and parishioners to attend events, such as the May Procession and the Reconciliation service held in school. Parents are supportive of the work of the school, and leaders recognise them as the first educators of their children, with more opportunities for parents to be fully involved in the life of the school recognised as an area for development. One parent in the inspection questionnaire stated that, 'St Margaret's has always had an excellent Catholic ethos, and the children's religious and personal welfare has been the main priority.' Currently, there is not a coherent set of processes in place regarding the way that the school's Catholic life and mission is monitored, reviewed, and reported upon. Not all stakeholders are involved in self-evaluation processes, which limits their contribution and their understanding of the schools' strengths and areas for development. For example, governors provide a supportive role to the school but have limited opportunities to offer challenge.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

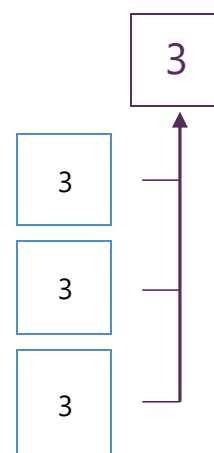
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



Some pupils are developing appropriate knowledge, skills, and understanding required by the *Religious Education Directory*. Most pupils, particularly those who have the potential to be working at greater depth, do not achieve as well as they should in at least one age phase. Pupils, relative to their age and capacity, make some use of their knowledge, understanding, and skills to reflect spiritually and think ethically and theologically about the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 reflected upon what 'love your neighbour as yourself' means to them, and the youngest pupils were able to role play going to church and being part of the parish family. When asked to recall prior learning, a majority of pupils were not able to speak confidently about what they have learned in RE. Religious vocabulary is highlighted in most lessons, and some pupils are able to use this to articulate their learning. For example, pupils in Years 3, 4, and 5 spoke about the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Pupils enjoy learning in RE. They spoke enthusiastically about the lesson they completed on 'The Common Good', which allowed them to use IT and think about how they could help others. However, generally, pupils demonstrate a limited ability to work independently and take the initiative in their learning. They produce work that is inconsistent in its quality, with little evidence of individuality and creativity. Pupils do not understand how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve, partly due to the fact that the school's marking and feedback policy is not adhered to in RE. Assessment of learning does not reflect achievement against the expected outcomes of the Directory.

The transition to meeting the requirements of the Directory is at its early stages. Teachers follow a recommended scheme, but have insufficient subject knowledge and understanding of the expected outcomes and ways of knowing to move learning forward. The approach to planning is inconsistent and doesn't link to pupils' current assessment. The variety of learning experiences is narrow, so opportunities to regularly develop creativity, use the outdoors, enhance their digital skills, or develop independence were not evident. In the youngest classes, continuous provision did not relate to RE learning. In addition, teachers' skills in questioning needs to develop to ensure pupils

have the opportunity to recall prior knowledge, extend and deepen their learning, think critically, and check for understanding. Consistently, time was given for reflection at the end of each lesson. The pupils valued this time to think about how their learning in the lesson impacted on the way they live their life. For example, the youngest pupils shared a way that they could live like Jesus at home, at school, and in the community. Teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) work well together, and the work of the LSAs has a positive impact on pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable.

Leaders and governors show positive intentions in relation to the RE curriculum moving forward. They understand that RE needs to be comparable with other school improvement priorities, particularly in terms of professional development, timetabling and resourcing. They recognise the need to ensure that whole-school policies, such as that of marking and feedback, are adhered to in RE, and that teaching and learning needs to more faithfully reflect the Directory. The RE coordinator attends diocesan training, and teachers are beginning to work collaboratively with their nearest school to develop their understanding of the chosen RE scheme of work. The monitoring of RE has shortcomings: it does not include all relevant stakeholders, and it does not result in clear, detailed, and coherent plans for improvement which are acted upon to affect change. The executive head teacher and RE coordinator have an honest understanding of current standards and are confident that they can implement strategies necessary for improvement, ensuring that RE is given the highest priority moving forward.

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

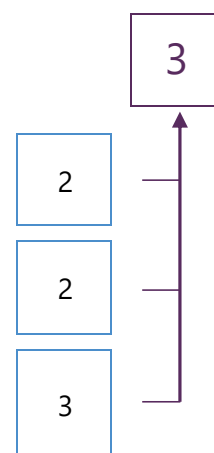
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

#### 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 positively to the prayer and worship opportunities provided by the school. For example, older pupils were reverent, well behaved, prayerful, and sang enthusiastically during the pupil-led worship about the conversion of Saul. Acts of worship are age appropriate and engage pupils' interest. Services of worship, such as those during Holy Week and the May Procession, help pupils to live the liturgical year. In the worship observed during the inspection, pupils were able to respond to the scripture heard, and to consider how the bible impacts on the way they live their lives. For example, having listened to the story of Zachaeus in the Reconciliation service, pupils reflected on times when they hadn't made the right choice, and how making the wrong choice made themselves and others feel. Pupils in the oldest class are supported to plan and lead acts of worship for their peers with the 'gather, listen, respond, and go forth' format. They are clearly proud to share their prayer experiences with one another, and they undertake liturgical ministries willingly. These prayer times contribute to the Catholic ethos of the school, and music and singing are used to enhance the prayerful atmosphere during worship. Pupils explained the impact that their worship has on them, saying, for example, that it helps them to live more like Jesus.

Prayer and liturgy are part of school life and there is a daily opportunity for pupils to pray together. Well-established routines of daily prayer, adult-led and pupil-led worship, meditation, and the Examen reflect the Catholic character of the school. Pupils are familiar with traditional prayers of the Church and prayers in the Welsh language, saying, for example, the rosary in October and May, and saying the prayer after lunch in Welsh. They stated that they appreciate the calm and quiet of daily meditation, and the opportunity to reflect on their day through the Examen before going home. Links with the local parish are strong, and leaders strive to involve families in the prayer life of the school, for example, offering open invitations to attend weekly Mass and the Reconciliation Liturgy observed in the inspection. Themes from lessons are often reinforced through prayer, helping pupils to apply them to their daily lives. All staff are good role models who capably guide pupils in their planning of prayer and worship. For example, the 'head of school' delivered an engaging meditation

session to pupils in Reception to Year 2, helping them to think about and share what they were thankful for in God's creation, such as the birds they could hear and the caterpillar crawling on the grass. The school environment, both indoors and outdoors, is well used, with appropriate prayer tables in all classrooms. These areas are well cared for and conducive to prayer. The use of the parish church and the developing prayer garden are valuable features. All classrooms have displays that support prayer and learning.

Leaders and governors ensure that there are regular opportunities to celebrate Mass and at key times during the liturgical year, such as Lent and Advent. They facilitate preparation for the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion, in conjunction with the parish. During the inspection, the executive head teacher, ably supported by pupils and the parish priest, led a reverent Reconciliation service, following which three pupils made their First Reconciliation. Leaders understand the Church's liturgical year, its seasons and feasts, and the necessary skills to develop meaningful themes. However, the school does not have a comprehensive annual plan of prayer and liturgy provision. All staff recently attended diocesan training on the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*. However, the Collective Worship Policy has not been reviewed in line with the new Directory, and a clear strategy for building up the skills of participation and the progression of traditional prayer, as pupils journey through the school, is underdeveloped. Pupils' views on their own pupil-led prayer times are regularly sought. However, regular professional development for staff on planning prayer and liturgy, together with rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and review of the quality of the full range of prayer and liturgy, would ensure collective worship experiences develop further.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Margaret's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	401266
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	6743314
Full postal address of the school	St Margaret's Catholic Primary School, Ty Fry, Aberdare, Rhondda, Cynon, Taff, CF44 7PP
School phone number	01685876072
Head teacher	Joanne Conway
Chair of governors	Denis Slyne
School Website	<a href="http://www.stmargarets.cymru">www.stmargarets.cymru</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	23 <sup>rd</sup> – 25 <sup>th</sup> November 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	AA

## The inspection team

Laura Taylor  
Rebecca Langley

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

