



St Marys Catholic Primary School

URN: 149640

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Clifton

01 July 2026 – 02 July 2026

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 RE

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

2

2

2

2

No

Yes

Fully

Compliance Statement

- The school is not compliant with the general norms of teaching religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.

What the school does well

- St Mary's is a vibrant Catholic community where all are welcomed with kindness and love.
- Pupils show great respect for adults and each other and their behaviour in religious education lessons is exemplary.
- The staff are a team committed to each other and all the pupils, going the extra mile for those most vulnerable.
- Alongside the 'Chaplaincy for all' offer, there many opportunities for pupils to worship in many different forms including child-led and adult led clubs such as rosary club, Bible Society and Cafod club.
- Other faiths teaching and learning is valued and appreciated by pupils particularly the visitors that come in to school to share their beliefs.

What the school needs to improve

- Enable pupils to make continual progress in religious education through high-quality feedback to pupils and the use of assessment information in planning.
- Ensure that religious education is prioritised as a core subject with all classes covering 10% of curriculum time.
- Ensure that high-quality teaching and learning is consistent through robust monitoring procedures that are focused on identified areas for improvement, with impact clearly recorded.

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

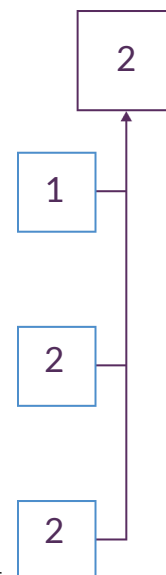
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



Pupils demonstrate a deep and secure understanding of the school's mission, confidently articulating its values and how these shape daily life. Their ability to speak about both the local and universal Church reflects a maturity in faith formation, and they participate enthusiastically in all aspects of Catholic life. Pupils recognise themselves as made in the image and likeness of God and, together with strong relationships, this underpins their happiness and confidence. Following in the footsteps of Jesus, they respond wholeheartedly to the call of **Catholic social teaching**, taking personal responsibility for caring for creation and supporting those in need. This is evident in their contributions to local charities such as the foodbank and global fundraising for **Cafod**. Acts of kindness are celebrated through class kindness jars, contributing to the school receiving the 'School of Kindness Award'. Pupils show deep respect for one another and for those of other faiths, welcoming visitors who share their traditions. Behaviour is exemplary, and the 'Chaplaincy for All' initiative ensures every pupil feels a sense of belonging. Chaplaincy leaders are admired by their peers as "really holy and really helpful," modelling the values they promote.

The mission statement is a driving force within the school and has an impact on its Catholic life. Staff are supportive in promoting this mission, serving as strong role models and using restorative practice to maintain consistent, compassionate behaviour expectations. Their dedication is evident in initiatives such as the staff-led retreat day and the collective commitment to caring for all pupils and one another. Governors, parents and staff agree that the mission is lived daily, creating a family ethos where everyone is welcomed warmly and where staff are committed to supporting the most vulnerable pupils. The school environment

reflects its Catholic identity through high-quality displays and a beautifully maintained chapel adorned with mosaics and collages from past and present pupils, treated with reverence whenever used. Provision for relationships education is well led and meets diocesan requirements.

The head provides strong leadership which is deeply rooted in a passion for Catholic education. The headteacher and governors prioritise the mission of the school and continually seek to enhance Catholic life, promoting the diocesan vision through work with the Dunstan Catholic Educational Trust (DCET) and maintaining links with the local parish. Parents are highly supportive, attending services, Masses and events such as the opening of the prayer garden, and they speak warmly of the school's nurturing environment and inclusive ethos. 'The staff work incredibly hard to ensure that all children feel they are part of a Catholic community that shares faith love and kindness to others.' While staff have mapped aspects of **Catholic social teaching** across the wider curriculum, this is not yet explicit enough for all pupils to recognise its presence in subjects such as history, geography and science. Pupils benefit from 'Legacy Days', researching inspirational figures such as Malala Yousafzai, Nelson Mandela and Harriet Tubman, producing high-quality work. Leaders and the trust prioritise support for leaders and staff, who value diocesan and bespoke training that has strengthened their confidence in leading prayer and supporting Catholic life. Governors are ambitious, well-organised and conscientious, though monitoring processes require greater focus to ensure clearer impact. Chaplaincy leaders contribute meaningfully to evaluating Catholic life, and induction procedures ensure new staff feel welcomed and understand their role within this vibrant Catholic community.

Religious education

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 key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

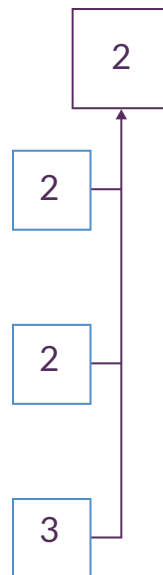
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 religious education lessons, behave exemplarily and show a strong desire to learn. They respond confidently to questions and ask their own with enthusiasm. Pupils' engagement with religious education varies across the school, with some classes demonstrating secure knowledge and emerging understanding of the *Religious Education Directory (RED)*, while others show secure knowledge but limited ability to apply or articulate deeper understanding. From the Reception class, pupils confidently use religious vocabulary in context and show strong spiritual awareness through their responses to 'I wonder' questions, which are thoughtfully captured in floor books. They speak with confidence and understanding about Bible stories, their key messages, and other faiths, demonstrating curiosity and enthusiasm in the questions they ask. When given the opportunity, pupils work independently, concentrate well and produce work of good quality, with signs of creativity emerging in some classes. However, inconsistencies in challenge mean that not all pupils are able to demonstrate the full extent of their knowledge and understanding. Where teachers provide clear next steps and success criteria, pupils understand how well they are doing and how to improve, though this practice is not consistent across the school.

Teachers are mostly confident in their subject knowledge, although Branch 6 of the *Religious Education Directory* has presented challenges. In some classes, opportunities for pupils to deepen understanding or demonstrate secure knowledge are missed, and expectations vary across the school. Most teachers are committed to the value of religious education and adapt planning effectively for pupils with additional needs, enabling them to learn well. Questioning,

however, is not consistently used to probe understanding, and higher-order questioning, when present, leads to noticeably deeper thinking. Pupils' efforts are celebrated, contributing to high levels of motivation, and teachers provide time for reflection, supporting pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils enjoy presenting their learning in varied ways, including art, drama, role play and research, and high-quality resources enhance lessons. Teaching assistants provide sensitive and effective support in some classes, capturing pupils' responses well. Despite these strengths, feedback systems are not used consistently, and missed opportunities for challenge and deeper learning contribute to uneven progress.

All classes follow the *Religious Education Directory* with Year 6 following the Year 5 content, and leaders ensure quality resources are used to enhance learning, such as photographs of local churches that pupils delighted in identifying. However, long-term planning for mixed-age classes has resulted in some year groups missing a full year of teaching, and the strategy to 'backfill' learning through elicitation at the start of a branch is not robust enough to secure sequential progression. Not all classes currently meet the required 10% curriculum time for religious education due to absences for activities such as music lessons and sports events, and in some cases religious education is not recorded every week. Leaders ensure staff attend diocesan training, which has strengthened confidence in subject knowledge, but monitoring lacks sufficient focus to drive improvement and does not align with areas identified for improvement in the CSED**. As a result, religious education teaching is strong in some classes but not all, and there is not yet a clear, shared vision for religious education across the school. While there is evidence of adapted learning and challenge in some classes, leaders do not ensure that all pupils' needs are consistently met. Catholic life is enriched through church visits and visitors from other faiths, which pupils value highly, appreciate and enjoy. However, action plans are confusing, with duplicated areas for development rated differently and lacking clear impact measures.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

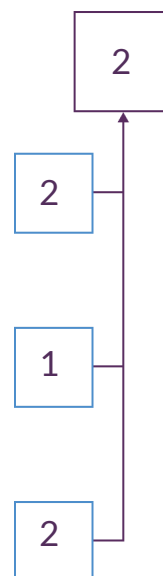
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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



Pupils respond with deep reverence and joy to all opportunities for **prayer and liturgy**, demonstrating respect, attentiveness and a strong sense of the sacred. They join confidently in prayers, responses and liturgical signs, including those before the Gospel, and sing with beauty and enthusiasm from the youngest age. Pupils relish the chance to lead prayer and liturgy, approaching this responsibility with pride and maturity. Their secure knowledge of the **liturgical year** enables them to recognise its rhythms and changes, and they understand a wide range of prayer forms such as traditional prayers, the rosary and silent reflection. Pupils plan class prayer and liturgy using a common format across the school, supported effectively by adults, and all pupils have the opportunity to take part in planning and delivery. They have begun evaluating aspects of prayer and liturgy, though this is not yet used consistently to improve future experiences. A rich variety of prayer opportunities is available, including the child-led rosary club in the chapel, the Bible Society group and the adult-led Cafod club, with all pupils from the Nursery upwards having the opportunity to be prayer leaders. Pupils reflect meaningfully on their prayer experiences and understand how prayer inspires action in their lives.

Prayer is clearly central to the daily life of the school, shaping routines, relationships and the community's shared identity. Daily prayers are said in every class and continue even during school trips, while staff and governors pray together before meetings. Pupils enjoy engaging and creative experiences of Catholic tradition, including child-led stations of the cross, the 'living rosary' involving 59 pupils, the crowning of Mary procession and Mass with the local parish. Scripture (the previous Sunday's gospel) is central to most prayer and liturgy

opportunities. Staff model exemplary practice through their reverence, participation and leadership, joining pupils in prayer, signs and singing. Teachers and teaching assistants support pupils well in planning and leading worship, ensuring prayerfulness is maintained and pupils feel confident in their roles. Staff select a wide range of high-quality hymns and religious songs, both traditional and contemporary, which pupils sing with enthusiasm. Every classroom has a well-kept prayer table, regularly checked by Chaplaincy leaders, containing age-appropriate artefacts. The newly opened prayer garden and the chapel provide quiet, sacred spaces for reflection. Parents are warmly welcomed to Masses and services, which are well attended, and pupils visit the parish church regularly throughout the year.

The trust policy provides clear guidance for staff in preparing prayer and liturgy and supporting pupils to do the same, though the skill-development strategy within it is not yet followed consistently. Mass is celebrated in school, and pupils attend church services throughout the year, marking feast days and participating in traditions such as stations of the cross and the crowning of Mary. Staff benefit from diocesan training, which has strengthened their confidence in leading prayer and supporting pupils in planning and delivering worship. The religious education lead is a strong role model in offering engaging and high-quality whole-school worship that is accessible to all. Leaders prioritise high-quality resources to enrich prayer experiences, including beautiful statues, especially of Mary, crosses and religious artwork displayed throughout the school. These elements contribute to a prayerful, vibrant Catholic environment where pupils grow spiritually and experience the richness of the Church's tradition.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Marys Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	149640
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8652059
Full postal address of the school	Rowden Hill, CHIPPENHAM, SN15 2AH
School phone number	01249 653469
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Lucy Buckland
Chair of Governors	Mrs Jan Downie
School Website	www.st-marys-pri.wilts.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Religious Order Poor Servants of the Mother of God
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Dunstan Catholic Educational Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	
Age-range of pupils	3 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	27 February 2020
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The Inspection Team

Dawn Theresa Summers-Breeze Lead

Rebecca Musarurwa

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