



St Mary's Catholic School Benton

URN: 140081

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle

25–26 January 2024

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

1

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

Yes

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

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

Fully

1

What the school does well

- The commitment and drive of the head teacher and the assistant head teacher for Catholic life inspire all within the St Mary's community. Their passion ensures that the school's Catholic life and mission are vibrant, being relevant to all in the school. Consequently, all staff serve as outstanding role models and ensure that Christ is at the centre of all that the school does.
- Students' ability to articulate how the Catholic mission of the school impacts on their life, and the decisions they make as a consequence, is impressive. All students strive to live an authentic Catholic life.
- Pastoral care at St Mary's is second to none; with the school placing a particular focus on supporting the most vulnerable within their community.

- The religious education department's effective and thoughtful planning ensures that all groups of students experience outstanding teaching and, as a result, achieve outstanding outcomes.
- The time and resourcing given to collective worship by leaders and governors ensures that prayer and liturgy are a focal point of school life, with all students benefiting from this regardless of faith.

What the school needs to improve

- Further strengthen the parish links with the school.
- Ensure all students continue to participate in the planning and preparation of collective worship in tutor time.

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

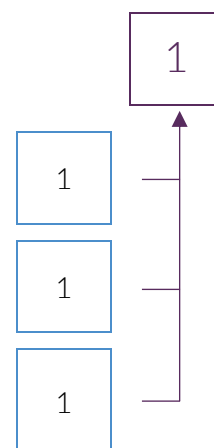
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



Students benefit hugely from the commitment shown by all staff in their mission to provide a holistic, Christ-centred experience. All students understand that they are unique and made in the image of God; they also comment that staff are helping them to follow Christ's example. Students and others in the wider community fully understand the school's new mission statement and they speak knowledgeably about this. They talk eloquently about the impact of the school mission and its values on their everyday lives, both in and out of the classroom. As one student states, 'at St Mary's everyone has a place and we are all celebrated for our individual talents'.

Staff are clear on their shared vision and act to ensure that the school's mission has an impact on all aspects of school life; with one student commenting, 'staff are top notch in showing us the way forward'. Pastoral care is outstanding, with staff at all levels going the extra mile to ensure that students, their families and the wider community are supported, both materially and in a spiritual sense. Links with local parishes are strong and students are involved in music and liturgy in local churches. Mass is celebrated weekly in school, being well attended by staff and students with the majority of them actively participating in liturgies. The school is wholly inclusive towards all faiths and backgrounds, with a particular focus on supporting the most vulnerable. It offers a range of enriching opportunities that cater for the spiritual needs of the diverse student population. The school has gone to great lengths to ensure that those of other faiths have dedicated prayer spaces and religious groups, such as the Islamic Union; thus, meeting the spiritual needs of all. Catholic social teaching values are woven into the life of the school, with all staff and students responding to these. They are underpinned by the school's relentless commitment to living the Gospel values in a way that has become the norm for day-to-day school

life. This drives the whole school curriculum intent. All members of the St Mary's community are enthusiastic in their support for charities such as Cafod, St Cuthbert's Care and the creation of hampers for local families. This support reflects the mission of the school and surveys evidence that they are much appreciated by the wider community. The strong chaplaincy is central to all that the school does and the chaplaincy team, ably led by the assistant head teacher for Catholic life, are committed to the principle that every member of the school community has something to give to others. This has had a profound impact on the actions of staff and students in all areas of school, and wider community life. The school's provision for personal development meets diocesan requirements and is well tailored to meet the needs of the students at St Mary's.

The head teacher is an inspirational Catholic leader and is expertly supported by her leadership team. This is recognised by students and staff, who see her and all senior leaders as exemplary role models. Consequently, all staff play an active part in leading on Catholic life and spirituality. Governors have a strong skill set and know their school well. This expertise is effectively used to ensure incisive monitoring and evaluation when assessing the school's provision and helps to refine the Catholic life experience for all. Staff induction is outstanding and continued training is also strong; discussions and surveys show all staff appreciate the support they receive from leaders in school, feeling valued and respected.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

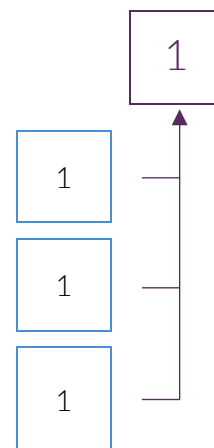
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Students from all backgrounds achieve very high levels of attainment in religious education, making excellent progress. Through skilled adaptation by teachers they are able to understand, explain and evaluate complex concepts with confidence. Students have an excellent religious vocabulary, with time dedicated to religious language acquisition in every lesson. This is particularly evident in Year 7 and Year 8 lessons, where the curriculum has been expertly designed to reflect the requirements of the new Religious Education Directory. Retrieval is a central part of the everyday lesson and students are able to make good use of their learning journey to understand the sequencing of the curriculum. Student engagement and concentration are exceptional and students enjoy strong working relationships with their peers and subject teachers. Consequently, behaviour and attitudes in the classroom are outstanding. Independent learning is a strength of the department. An example being Year 7 work on Rublev's Icon and the Trinity, where students confidently made links from scripture to the artwork. Students take pride in all that they do and written work is completed to a very high standard.

All religious education staff have comprehensive subject knowledge and regular departmental training focuses on the sharing of this expertise. This collaborative approach to developing skills has ensured that all staff have an agreed vision of excellence. Staff use shared lesson resources to ensure consistency of content across classes and this is tailored to suit the needs of individual students through skilled adaptive teaching. Staff are adept in using questioning to encourage deeper thinking from students; this enables students to make links and further consolidate their learning. There is a strong culture of praise within the department and students respond well to the encouragement given by all members of staff. This happens through a combination of the school's rewards system alongside affirming and personal approaches adopted by the department. Staff provide students with a range of opportunities and assessments which allow

them to express their ideas in a number of creative ways. There is evidence of purposeful, targeted feedback on assessments with clear points for development that students have acted upon. The department recognises the importance of religious education in the curriculum. They see the development of the whole child as their responsibility. Consequently, time is made available in all lessons for students to reflect on how their learning impacts on the decisions they make and their own personal faith journey. Learning support assistants are well deployed by staff within the department and have an excellent understanding of both the curriculum and the students in their care.

Leaders and departmental staff, have expertly crafted a well-sequenced curriculum based on the new Directory. Additional time was allocated to staff for this as a consequence of the leadership team's decision to front load the implementation of the new curriculum, which is constantly reviewed and adapted to better suit the needs of all learners. Religious education is the core of the core at St Mary's and is viewed as the lead department. It is clearly outward facing in its approach. Particularly impressive is the department's use of tagging, which ensures that good practice is shared and used by other departments. This is particularly effective with students who have special educational needs. The head of department gives her all and her open-door approach ensures that all in her department feel supported and are confident in their roles. Senior leaders and governors have a comprehensive overview of the department's work, offering appropriate and timely support and challenge.

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

Prayer is an important part of the day at St Mary's and appropriate time is allocated for this. Staff are successful in making liturgical content relevant and this is recognised by students, who can make the link between the daily scripture and their own lives, resulting in high levels of engagement. The majority of students display excellent behaviour and show great respect during these times, with prayerful silence being a notable feature when groups of students come together. Students appreciate the many opportunities for quiet contemplation and prayer, with one commenting that they appreciate the opportunity for, 'quiet and stillness before the rush of the school day'. Prayer is also reactionary and responds to the particular needs of the community. This results in a more meaningful prayer experience for both staff and students. Students in Year 10 and Year 11 talk eloquently about how prayer inspires them to action and how it will continue to do so when they leave St Mary's. Leaders and staff are skilled in offering a variety of ways to pray which are linked appropriately to the liturgical year; students are aware of this. The readings of the liturgical year give the focus for weekly worship and these readings are deconstructed to ensure age-appropriate understanding. Students appreciate and use the collaborative prayer book, that features prayers from various members of the school community. They are fully involved in prayer and liturgy life. During the year group assemblies, they participate fully and engage deeply with the activities that take place. Through the leadership of the school's chaplaincy team they are confident in taking on ministry and leading the celebration of the word. However, a small number of students were not actively involved or participated in shaping celebration of the word activities during tutor time. The majority of students know the meaning of the Church's liturgical year and understand how this shapes their prayer experience; for example, they know that the Stations of the Cross

are prayed and reflected on during Lent.

Prayer and liturgy are central to life at St Mary's and the chapel is at the heart of the school and is used daily for tutor time prayer sessions. Routines for prayer are well established and all aspects of prayer are faithfully Catholic. However, they are accessible to the diverse staff and student community. Staff at all levels are adept at modelling activities involving scripture, lectio divina, reflection and meditation. This gives students the confidence to explore and develop their own understanding of prayer. Students play an active part in creating high quality religious artwork and displays which are updated regularly to reflect the liturgical year and other significant days. Local parish priests visit the school weekly to celebrate the Eucharist and all students access this throughout the school year on a rota basis. The school also signposts students towards preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The school supports its parishes in this.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that ample time and resourcing are dedicated to celebration of the word at St Mary's. This is because all leaders care deeply about the spiritual formation of all members of the community. Governors and Trust staff visit school regularly and play a key role in the robust and thought-provoking monitoring and evaluation process. This informs the future development of celebration of the word and any associated training opportunities. Particular care is given to the induction of new staff. A comprehensive programme ensures staff who are not Catholic gain the confidence to authentically lead students in prayer. Staff acknowledge the generous amount of time given to training and welcome this.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic School
School unique reference number (URN)	140081
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3914714
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic School , Benton Park Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE7 7PE
School phone number	01912153260
Headteacher	Emma Patterson
Chair of Local Governing Body	Mick McGhee
School Website	http://stmarysnewcastle.co.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Secondary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	January 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Mark Taylor	Lead
Suzanne Lewis-Dale	Team
Andrew Gardner	Team
Rob Young	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