



St Mary's Catholic Primary School South Moor

URN: 148845

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of Bishop Stephen Wright, Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

25 September 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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

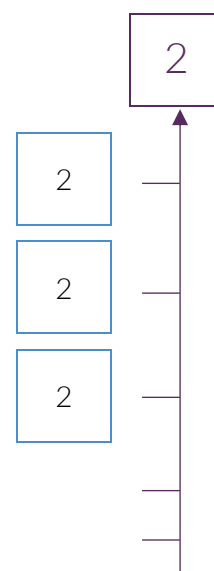
Collective worship (p.7)

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 fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' conference.
- The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the Diocesan Bishop.
- The school has fully responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection.

What the school does well

- Pupils are well-behaved, enthusiastic about their learning and proud to belong to St Mary's Catholic Primary School
- Recent improvements in teaching and learning enable pupils to achieve well
- School leaders are strong role-models for pupils and staff in leading meaningful, engaging and prayerful liturgies. The quality of relationships at all levels underpins the school's Catholic mission
- The school is strongly supportive of the most vulnerable within its community

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that classroom prayer and liturgy is more consistently timetabled across all classes with increased opportunities for pupils to lead prayerful experiences
- Monitor religious education to ensure delivery of the planned curriculum
- Further develop consistency in written feedback and marking so that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve

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

2

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

2

2

Pupils enjoy attending St Mary's Catholic Primary School and say that it is a calm, well organised and happy place to be, which is supported by evidence gathered during this inspection. Pupils show pride in belonging to this school. They know the school's mission is to, 'grow together in the friendship of faith'. Pupils understand that they are each valued and cared for as unique persons. They value this as something which makes their school special. They describe how they have raised funds for Cafod and other local charities. Pupils feel happy, safe and secure. The behaviour of pupils, their care and respect for each other and the quality of relationships are all good. Older pupils enjoy responsibilities and enjoy working with their Reception class buddies. They understand that the school is committed to following the teachings and example of Jesus and can describe how these impact on their daily lives. One pupil described St Mary's as being, 'like one big family'. Pupils are actively involved in supporting those in need, however their knowledge and understanding of the theology underpinning Catholic social teaching is not embedded. Pupils have a well-developed sense of respect for those of other faiths.

The school's mission statement is visible in classrooms and around the school. Links between the mission and the daily life of the school are underdeveloped and some pupils struggle to articulate what the mission means to them. Staff are committed to the implementation of the Church's mission. They are positive role models and bear witness to the school's mission through the love and care they show for pupils. This is exemplified in

the quality of supportive pastoral care offered to all pupils, including the most vulnerable. Parents value the support they receive from school; one commented that, 'They always go that extra step without being asked or expected.' The school has a strong culture of inclusion and welcome. Staff work hard to develop strong relationships with pupils and their families, and this is a strength of St Mary's. A parent commented that, 'As parents, we feel it is a safe space for our son to grow.' Provision for pupil and staff mental health and well-being is strong. The school's Catholic character is reflected in the environment with well-maintained prayer spaces, focal points for prayer and opportunities for reflection located around the school. The school's provision for relationships, sex and health education meets statutory and Diocesan requirements.

Leaders ensure that pupils feel safe, protected, respected and known as unique people; they care that all pupils are thriving. Governors are conscientious and contribute well to the school's Catholic character through regular visits and meetings with school leaders. The school recognises the challenge created by the closure of their parish church and seeks to overcome these barriers through regularly inviting the parish priest to share Mass with pupils in school. Parents report that, 'It is like one big family, we all support each other.' Leaders regularly engage with the local Catholic cluster, to ensure that there is a culture of collaboration. They also access the expertise of the Diocese to further the development of the Catholic life and mission of the school. However, the evaluation of the Catholic life and mission of the school by leaders is not yet fully embedded. The headteacher leads with authenticity and love and resourcing decisions are always rooted in faith. A high priority is given to professional development and early career teachers are effectively supported by the experienced team around them, with one stating, 'I feel really well supported by school leaders, they are always checking on my well-being.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

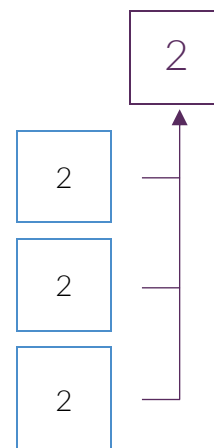
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Within the planned curriculum, all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs or disabilities, know, remember, and do more with their learning and achieve good outcomes. They routinely recall and visit prior learning and can articulate themselves clearly when discussing what they have learnt. Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons and speak enthusiastically about the variety of different ways in which they can show their learning. This ensures that pupils are actively engaged within this. Pupils are confident and can relate their understanding of scripture and religious commitment to everyday life. They concentrate for extended periods of time and work well in pairs and groups, listening respectfully to one another. Their behaviour during lessons is always good. This means pupils can progress in a timely manner through the curriculum. Work in books is generally well-presented, though there are some inconsistencies in quality. Verbal feedback is used well during lessons and good examples of pupils' work are shared to inspire others; however, there are variations in how written feedback is used, which leads to some pupils not knowing how well they are doing or how to improve their work.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and a good understanding of how pupils learn. They are committed to the value of religious education as a core subject within the curriculum. They readily take advantage of opportunities to deepen their knowledge through professional development. Teachers plan the curriculum effectively so that it is linked to pupils' prior knowledge. Engaging and inspirational opportunities are created in lessons. An example of this was seen during the inspection as pupils in a Year 3/4 class participated enthusiastically as the jigsaw pieces fell into place in a lesson about Jesus's family tree. However, teachers' planning does not always match the work in pupils' books. As a result, pupils may miss key aspects of their learning. The use of scripture in lessons enriches learning and the school has

invested in new Bibles in Key Stage 2, although opportunities to use them during lessons are sometimes missed. Teachers provide varied methods for pupils to record their learning, meeting the needs of all learners. High quality work and good pupil responses during lessons are highlighted and celebrated. There is a strong sense of teamwork and staff regularly seek out support from each other or school leaders to enhance teaching and learning.

The curriculum is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. It has parity with other subjects in relation to timetabling, professional development, budgeting and staffing. Whole school policies such as marking are applied equitably across all core subjects. The religious education subject leader has a good level of expertise and is actively involved in improving teaching and learning. She has worked closely with school leaders, Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust and the Diocese to secure recent rapid improvements in religious education. This has resulted in teaching that is consistently good. School leaders have a clear vision for teaching and learning and are clear about their high expectations for the subject. Monitoring of the quality of work in religious education books and lessons provides good evidence of improvements in the subject. Accurate self-analysis by school leaders ensures that the main areas identified for development are included in improvement plans. However, teachers' planning is not yet monitored closely enough to ensure that the planned curriculum is fully delivered. Leaders effectively plan professional development opportunities for staff in both subject knowledge and pedagogical development. Governors are well informed about standards in religious education and are fully involved in the school self-evaluation process.

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

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

2

Pupils of all ages actively and fully participate in prayer and liturgy opportunities offered by the school. They are attentive and respond respectfully and reverently. Pupils join in prayer with confidence and sing with enthusiasm. They generally understand the structure which the school uses for liturgical prayer, although opportunities for pupils to lead classroom liturgies are not consistently well-developed. Adults help pupils to reflect on prayer experiences although the evaluation of liturgies is not yet routine. Pupils understand what constitutes high quality prayer and liturgy. They can make links with how prayer and liturgy can influence their lives. For example, during the inspection a whole school celebration of the word, led by the head of school, encouraged pupils to think about 'greatness'; each class was tasked with recognising ways during the coming week in which their classmates can achieve greatness through their actions. Pupils understand how prayer and liturgy is structured around the Church's liturgical year. They enjoy leading whole-school celebrations of the word, where their parents are invited into school to participate. Pupils work well with adults to plan the prayer spaces which are evident in each classroom by selecting resources which are reflective of the liturgical time of year.

A clear plan for prayer and liturgy ensures that this is central to school life. The rhythm of the prayer life of the Church is reflected in the daily pattern of prayer evident across the school. A range of ways of praying which reflect the Catholic tradition of the school are used to enrich prayer and liturgy. Every classroom has a prayer space and care is taken to ensure that these spaces are used appropriately with reverence. Staff use their knowledge of scripture to ensure that passages reflecting the liturgical season form the heart of prayer and liturgy and enable full participation by pupils. Adults model good practice in leading prayer and liturgy and are supported themselves through professional development that

impacts on provision in this area. Opportunities for pupils to lead prayer and liturgy for the wider community are timetabled across the school calendar, with one class inviting parents in to join them weekly. Masses for significant feasts and holy days are celebrated in school, to which all parents and parishioners are invited. The school seeks to work well with the parish through linking into parish celebrations.

School leaders have established a programme for whole school prayer and liturgy which guides staff involved in preparing and leading them. They have a good understanding of the different levels and skills reflective of the age and capacity of pupils to lead prayer and liturgy. Professional development for staff is well-targeted. However, expectations of the frequency of class celebrations of the word are not clearly communicated and therefore there are inconsistencies in practice between classes. School leaders recognise the importance of prayer and liturgy when setting budgets and allocating resources. As a result, staff who lead prayer and liturgy experiences have access to high quality resources. The school works with the parish priest to arrange regular Masses and to ensure pupils have access to sacramental preparations. Members of the school community can access Mass and other liturgies. Formal evaluation of the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy by school leaders does not happen regularly; therefore, there are missed opportunities to evaluate and identify areas for improvement. Governors are regular visitors and participants and have an overview of the school's programme for prayer and liturgy.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148845
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8403384
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Hustledown, South Moor, Stanley, DH9 6PH
School phone number	01207232189
Headteacher	Jennifer Gill
Chair of local governing body	Lorraine Murray
School Website	stmaryssouthmoor.bwcet.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	September 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

The inspection team

Michael Ewing
Julie Carr

Lead Inspector
Team Inspector

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