



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 148980

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

01–02 October 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

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- St Mary's Catholic Primary School is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- St Mary's Catholic Primary School has responded to and met the area for further development which was identified during the last inspection.

What the school does well

- St Mary's is an unmistakable and distinctive Catholic school which goes about supporting the Church's mission of making disciples in a significant, yet humble way.
- All leaders have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development as a consequence of regular and rigorous monitoring and of honest self-evaluation. This creates a culture of determination to grow and to continue to improve.
- Pupils take on a variety of roles of responsibility, increasing their global and faith awareness as a result. They take on their roles with passion and dedication, as faith leaders, exemplifying what it means to be part of a truly Catholic school.
- Pupils at St Mary's make good progress from their starting points. By the time they leave the school, they have become religiously literate and are ready to meet the increased demands of the next phase of their education.
- Prayer is central to everything that happens at St Mary's. Pupils and staff alike recognise the power of prayer in their lives and are able to express their faith in a variety of creative ways.

What the school needs to improve

- Leaders must address the gaps in some teacher's subject knowledge so that all learners can achieve well.
- Pupils should be provided with systematic opportunities to revisit prior learning to ensure that knowledge and skills are retained over time.
- A clear framework for progression in expectations for pupil leadership of prayer and liturgy is required to ensure consistency throughout school.

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

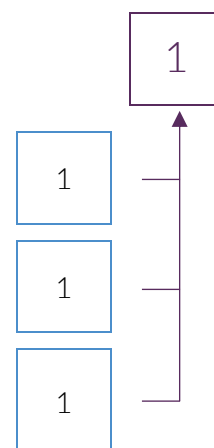
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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 Catholic Primary School is an outward-facing school which is committed to helping the most vulnerable within society. Pupils are happy and positive about all aspects of school life. They know they attend a school that allows them to, 'grow closer to God', and enables them to learn, 'how to live my life day-to-day'. Pupils clearly care for each other, with Year 6 pupils proud of their role as buddies to the younger children, and they are given a wide range of opportunities to lead the spiritual and moral development of the school. They actively participate in a variety of initiatives which develop the Catholic life and mission of both the school and the individual, for example, their roles as Mini Vinnies or promoting Fairtrade. Pupils recognise aspects of theology and scripture that feed into their whole school values, such as forgiveness linking to the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Pupils show a deep respect for those of other faiths, and are able to talk about both Islam and Judaism with confidence and humanity. Pupils of all faiths feel deeply rooted within this Catholic school, with one child stating that, 'Even though I'm not Catholic, I feel part of the Church, part of the school and a part of the school community.'

Staff are collectively aware of their role in evangelising pupils and families of the St Mary's community, and Christ is held at the heart of everything that happens. This is a wholly inclusive school community where members and visitors alike are greeted with a warm welcome. The work done by the school to achieve its School of Sanctuary status is just one of many signs of the desire of the staff and pupils to care for the marginalised within our global society. The environment is a rich expression of the school's Catholic character and acts as a wonderful sign of the community's collective ambition to serve others. The pupils at St Mary's receive an exceptional level of pastoral care as highlighted by several parents. The sense of belonging to the community is tangible and is reflected in the positive relationships that exist between all members of the school community.

Through a carefully planned relationships and health education curriculum, pupils are prepared to meet the challenges of modern society. Leaders also ensure that staff skills, knowledge and enthusiasm are offered to other schools.

All leaders in St Mary's, including the governing board, have a passion for Catholic education, and are clearly determined that Christ is always at the heart of the school, embracing the lives of everyone. They show a commitment to supporting the most vulnerable in the community, with many examples shared of direct impact on local families, including those who have arrived as refugees. There are strong links between the school and the parish. The parish priest is a welcome and routine visitor to school, while pupils' faith is enhanced by the constant use of the local church. Parents are extremely supportive of the mission of the school, and are given many opportunities, formally and informally, to develop their understanding and awareness. Parents view St Mary's as a school that is, 'caring and kind. It really is a school family.' Pastoral care for staff is strong, with staff commenting upon the care and commitment from the headteacher. Staff feel part of a strong team, with one member of staff stating, 'Why would I want to work anywhere else?' Evaluation of the Catholic life and mission is understood by all, with staff and governors involved in this process, and leaders are able to use this to formulate future planning, which they share with all stakeholders.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

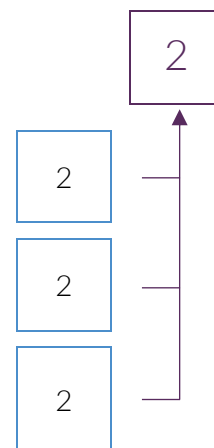
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 make good progress from their starting points. This is particularly evident as a result of the assessments carried out in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In discussion, pupils shared their broad religious knowledge and were able to illustrate how their learning has an impact upon them as individuals and as a community. Relative to their age and capacity, pupils at St Mary's are religiously literate. They are aware of the demands of religious commitment and respond joyously to their mission. Most pupils speak articulately about their learning in religious education lessons. They answer teachers' questions with a good level of accuracy and insight into their learning. Equally, they ask interesting questions which demonstrate a strong desire to learn and grow within their faith. Strong work is evident in most pupils' books across the school, though this is inconsistent in some classes. Pupils' responses to questions and tasks are usually well considered and demonstrate a good level of understanding. They enjoy their religious education lessons. One child commented that, 'RE is my favourite subject because we are always learning about new things.' Pupils are particularly positive about the opportunities that they get within the curriculum to express their creativity and there is clear evidence of this in their books.

Teachers demonstrate sound subject knowledge and pedagogical awareness. Most lessons are purposefully designed to elicit strong and informed responses from pupils. Despite this, in some areas, teacher subject knowledge is not yet developed enough to help pupils understand key concepts, and on some occasions, tasks are not designed or adapted appropriately to support pupils' learning. Staff recognise the centrality of religious education. Consequently, teachers plan and deliver an engaging curriculum enjoyed by all. In various lessons about the Jewish faith, pupils' learning was enriched through the use of real-life artefacts. The teaching of religious vocabulary is prioritised and pupils are given regular opportunities within lessons to practise saying new words and to use them in context. However, pupils do not always get routine opportunities to engage with prior learning over time so pupils are at risk of forgetting key knowledge, vocabulary and concepts. There is a strong dialogue between staff and pupils;

this is evident in lessons through verbal feedback and in books. However, on occasion, the feedback in books lacks clarity and pupils do not always know how to improve their work to move their learning on.

Leaders have ensured that the religious education curriculum is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Planning has ensured that this programme is taught with rigour as well as with creativity, and leaders have ensured that appropriate support and training has been given to staff for this. Parents are regularly informed of the expectations in religious education through weekly newsletters and termly reports, as well as opportunities to come into school. The headteacher has a thorough understanding of the quality of religious education in school through a carefully planned programme of monitoring and evaluation, with clear development points identified as next steps. She is able to articulate her vision of religious education to others, which in turn improves the quality of teaching and learning in the subject. Leaders in school expect adaptive teaching to take place, and this was witnessed throughout school, ensuring all pupils can work towards their potential. New staff are well supported in the subject, with access to training and mentor opportunities given, and this guidance is rightly valued by them. Governors are well informed about the quality of religious education in school, through headteacher reports, as well as opportunities to take part in learning walks and book scrutinies.

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

Pupils participate fully in prayer and liturgy, both in the classroom and whole school context. They are engaged and display reverence and respect throughout. Singing is an integral part of worship, and pupils participate with enthusiasm and joy. Pupils are fully aware of the liturgical year, and are able to talk about the breadth of yearly celebration, and were enthusiastic about their roles in leading, for example during Stations of the Cross. Prayer and liturgy is very well planned and delivered by pupils, especially as they get older, and they confidently and willingly use prior evaluations of worship to enhance future plans. Pupils also ensure that they incorporate aspects of the Church's year within their own planned prayer, such as sharing Lenten bags in class. Given that many pupils start school with very limited understanding or experience of prayer and liturgy, as identified in assessments, pupils make very good progress in their ability to lead worship. However, there are some inconsistencies in expectations in respect of prayer times within classrooms. Pupils can clearly talk about how prayer and liturgy has affected their personal lives, with one parent saying that their child always talks about their worship when they get home, including teaching the hymns to her family.

There is a prayerful atmosphere throughout St Mary's, which positively impacts on the expectation of behaviour. Pupils benefit from well-established routines which promote prayer and their own personal connection with God. Opportunities to pray in creative ways have been actively promoted by school leaders, ensuring these are now plentiful. Pupils speak about how they enjoy opportunities to express their faith in different ways. Opportunities for quiet reflective time have been established, with meditation a regular aspect of the school day from Reception onwards, while areas around the school give pupils the chance to pray quietly. Child led prayer and liturgy also gives pupils the opportunities of time to further their private relationship with God. Scripture is integral to pupils' experience of prayer and liturgy. The choice of scripture is carefully informed by the liturgical season, and those involved in ministry demonstrate an ability to help others to understand the word, leading to the development of faith. Pupils have a very good understanding of the value of scripture in prayer. Families are

regularly welcomed into school to join their child in the prayer life of the school. Staff at all levels participate in prayer and liturgy and act as very good role models to children through their engagement and reverence.

School has a Prayer and Liturgy policy which is understood by all, and there is a defined yearly plan, which ensures that all key times and holy days of obligation in the liturgical year are celebrated. There is an understanding by most in school of what is expected of pupils in each year group in terms of skills and participation in worship. However, this is not strategically mapped out to ensure consistency in all year groups, which means some opportunities to enhance provision are missed. Training is organised to upskill staff in leading prayer and liturgy, with all staff involved, especially those with less experience of prayer and liturgy in a Catholic school. Staff are supported by the leadership team in delivering worship to key stages, including the sharing of resources, and as a result are increasingly confident in leading. There are a wide range of resources throughout school that support and promote worship, including class prayer areas. The quality of prayer and liturgy is monitored and evaluated on a regular basis, with support welcomed from advisers. Leaders ensure feedback provides praise as well as opportunities for development.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	148980
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3923315
Full postal address of the school	Great Lime Road, Forest Hall, Great Lime Road, Forest Hall, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE12 7AB
School phone number	01918142006
Headteacher	Mrs Siobhan Foster
School Website	www.stmarysrcprimaryschool.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Bewick 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	26 -27 September 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Mr Paul Craig
Mr Martin Gray

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