



Diocese of  
**Hallam**

## **Section 48 Inspection Report**

### **The Catholic Life of the School and Religious Education**

#### **St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, a Catholic Voluntary Academy**

Herringthorpe Valley Rd, Rotherham S65 2NU  
URN: 106930

**Inspection date:** Thursday February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2018

**Lead Inspector:** Mr John Cape

**Associate Inspector:** Mrs Lindsay Gamble

**Name of Chair of Governors:** Mrs Caramia Muffett  
**Name of Head teacher:** Mrs Kathryn Thomas  
**Name of RE Subject Leader:** Miss Bernadette Jenkinson

**Inspection Grades: 1 is Outstanding, 2 is Good, 3 requires improvement in order to be good, 4 is Inadequate**

## INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

**OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:** how effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

**2**

*The above judgement on overall effectiveness is based on all the available evidence following the evaluation of the following three sections:*

**CATHOLIC LIFE**

**1**

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**2**

**COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

**1**

<b>OUTSTANDING (1)</b>	To be judged <b>OUTSTANDING</b> for overall effectiveness: The three Section judgements must all be <b>OUTSTANDING</b>
<b>GOOD (2)</b>	To be judged <b>GOOD</b> for overall effectiveness: The three Section judgements must all be at least <b>GOOD</b>
<b>REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT (3)</b>	To be judged <b>REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT</b> for overall effectiveness: One or more sections will be judged to <b>REQUIRE IMPROVEMENT</b> with no sections judged inadequate.
<b>INADEQUATE (4)</b>	To be judged <b>INADEQUATE</b> for overall effectiveness: At least one Section will be judged inadequate.

## Summary of key findings:

### **This is a Good Catholic Primary School**

- The Catholic Life of St. Mary's school is outstanding because the Catholic mission and ethos are given the highest priority and shared by senior leaders, staff and governors alike.
- The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding because prayer is at the heart of the school and forms the rhythm of each day.
- The quality of Religious Education is good because pupils enjoy Religious Education, can explain its value and are keen to do well leading to good progress in most lessons.
- The areas for improvement from the last inspection have all been addressed.

### **What the school needs to do to improve further.**

- Strengthen the school tracking system to carefully monitor the progress and attainment of all children to ensure they all make at least good progress.
- Further develop the monitoring role of the Religious Education co-ordinator to include regular opportunities to observe lessons, coach and model teaching, initiate work scrutinies and rigorously analyse progress and attainment data.
- Provide opportunities for governors to prioritise their involvement in the self-evaluation process, including the submission of the DSED (Diocesan Self Evaluation Document) and monitor the quality of provision in Religious Education.

### **Information about this inspection**

The Inspection of St Mary's has been carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Diocese of Hallam Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections as approved by the Bishop of Hallam. The process of inspection in the Diocese of Hallam has been developed as an activity of the Church to support schools in further deepening the quality of Catholic education provided. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule follows the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA 2017).

## **The inspection was carried out by Mr John Cape and Mrs Lindsay Gamble over one day:**

During this one-day inspection, we had the opportunity to:

- Discuss the work of the school with a number of key stakeholders including staff, governors, parish priest, chaplains, parents and pupils;
- Attend a whole school assembly led by the headteacher rooted in the theme of the Transfiguration of Jesus;
- Attend an act of Collective Worship led by the Religious Education co-ordinator;
- Talk to the pupils about St. Mary's school and how they enjoyed their learning and being part of the school community;
- Meet with pupils, parents, governors, parish priest and St. Bernard's chaplain;
- Analyse a number of parent and pupil questionnaire responses;
- Evidence school assessment information, progress reports, portfolios of work, photographic evidence and observe focal points and displays in and around school;
- Scrutinise pupil prayer journals;
- Examine high quality evidence of chaplaincy provision, including photographs, records and children's self-assessment since 2016;
- Scrutinise a wide range of children's Religious Education assessment work;
- Explore information posted on the school website.

### **Information about this school**

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is situated in Rotherham and serves the parishes of The Immaculate Conception, Herringthorpe and Blessed Trinity, Wickersley. The school converted to a Catholic Voluntary Academy in 2013 and is part of the Holy Spirit Umbrella Trust. It is an average sized Primary School with 211 pupils on roll and a high proportion of these children are baptised Catholics. On-entry profile indicates children commence school with average starting points. The number of children with Special Educational Needs is below local and national averages and currently there are 15 children eligible for pupil premium funding. For 14% of children English is their second language. The school provides wrap around care with Breakfast Club and After School Club.

## Full Report – Inspection Judgements

### CATHOLIC LIFE

#### The quality of the Catholic Life of the school is Outstanding

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	<b>Grade 1</b>
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school	<b>Grade 1</b>
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school	<b>Grade 1</b>

#### The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is Outstanding.

- The mission statement is central to the life of the school and is lived and embraced by all pupils in their daily school life. Pupils are proud of their school and clearly understand what is special about St. Mary's. They speak very enthusiastically about being a pupil and fully enjoy school life.
- They are taught a sense of responsibility and benefit greatly from the experiences offered. Pupils are outstanding ambassadors within school, the parish, local community and beyond, e.g. Shiloh centre in Rotherham.
- Pupils are very aware of the needs of others both locally and globally, responding passionately to issues of social injustice through prayer, fundraising activities and service to others.
- There is an active School Council so pupils have a voice and their views and opinions are warmly welcomed e.g. evaluations of Collective Worship and liturgies. Pupils were also responsible for naming the intervention room 'Chatterbox'.
- The school has achieved the Rights Respecting Schools Level 1 Award and is currently working towards Level 2; pupils have a clear set of values which enables them to lead happy, healthy lives and be responsible citizens.
- Pupils recognise the impact the school's ethos and expectations have on their own behaviour. They understand, 'Helping people makes you feel good and it's the right thing to do.' Pupils also talk with confidence of the need for reconciliation and how the 'Rights of the Child' initiative supports their development.
- Each class has a class charter which is an agreement that children and adults have created to support the ethos of the school. They indicate which rights they have, how they will respect them and how adults respect them too. The mascot, Ruby the racoon, can be seen all over school as a reminder to the children to appreciate their rights. The charter has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to school life.
- Children are developing a responsibility as active citizens to support those most vulnerable through the Rights Respecting Work and various fund raising events, e.g. Macmillan, Mission Together and Bluebell Hospice.

- The school choir has attended a variety of events singing at Rotherham Minster, Woodlands and Rotherham Hospice.
- Positive links are made with other Christian denominations e.g. United Reform Church. A statement from clergy at the church endorsed the strong and developing partnership with the school and the benefits to both communities.
- Prayer leaders independently lead lunchtime prayer groups providing excellent role models and commanding the total respect and admiration of younger pupils. They talked confidently about their special role in leading and supporting daily prayer. One said, 'I am happy to be a prayer leader because I am getting closer to God'.
- The school aims to be a sustainable school and there is a clear focus on reducing, reusing and recycling. Their logo is, 'We are God's children so let's protect His world'.
- An outstanding and informative corridor display focuses on children's commitment to the community, e.g. letters to the local MP about recycling facilities, support for the homeless and commitment to anti-bullying.
- Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are confident and articulate about the role of adults in the school when dealing with inappropriate behaviour and are clear about the anti-bullying policy. The school will not tolerate bullying in any form and there is a building relationships box for children to write about their fears and anxieties and pop their concerns into the box. Daily action is taken to respond to any concerns raised.
- Pupils have a deep sense of 'belonging' to the 'school family' and staff, parents and governors speak about the importance of this nurturing environment where pupils make a contribution to the Catholic Life of the school from a very early age.
- Pupils of all faiths are encouraged to share their experiences of belief and family celebrations. The school is inclusive and has embraced all of its families as part of the school community. All pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how they live their lives and how they treat others and are very aware that respect is earned through actions and is to be valued.
- Pupils willingly and confidently take on positions of responsibility and leadership within the school community, nominating and organising a variety of fundraising initiatives to support, e.g. the 'E Boutique' has a range of artefacts and jewellery for sale to pupils, parents and visitors and 50% of the proceeds go to Charity Shop and this is donated to charities determined by the pupils. This venture is excellent in promoting children's entrepreneurial skills.
- All pupils demonstrate respect and show reverence to the rites and traditions of their faith. They are proud of their religious identity and there is enthusiastic and active involvement in parish, trust and diocesan celebrations. Pupils understand the importance of respect for others, regardless of faith tradition.
- Relationships with parents, parish and the wider community are excellent resulting in a variety of activities which improve the school's provision e.g. sustainable garden.
- Pastoral care is outstanding. Parents are very appreciative of the care and support their children are given in this family school and confirm staff always go one step further to help. As a result, pupils are happy, confident and secure in their own stage of spiritual growth.
- Parents are especially proud of their school; 'St. Mary's is fully inclusive where children have learnt to be ethical and empathetic'. And the 'Home for Christmas' performance was a moving testimony to the children's commitment to those in need.

### **The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is Outstanding.**

- One of the outstanding strengths of this school is the Chaplaincy team who have worked stoically over time to provide a range of outstanding opportunities for children to grow and develop in the Catholic faith and tradition.
- They act as a catalyst between school and the parish by further strengthening links, displaying children's work in church, in leading prayer group meetings and offering high quality pastoral care and support. During Lent, and before the school day started, children, staff and parents voluntarily visited church to celebrate Stations of the Cross in a powerful and reverent celebration led by one of the chaplains.
- St. Mary's is a school that is extremely committed to strong Catholic traditions and ethos.
- People are at the heart of this nurturing, family community. All are valued and welcomed. Faith is modelled and staff work tirelessly to put the school's inclusive mission into practice.
- Staff demonstrate an outstanding level of commitment to the school community and work hard to maintain excellent relationships at all levels. Highly effective support is evident for all pupils, it is attentive to the needs of the most vulnerable in both policy and practice which reflects the Catholic Life of the school.
- A high quality of care permeates throughout the school and as a result, there is a real sense of team spirit and positive working relationships.
- The Catholic character of the school is apparent in the learning environment and is equally reflected in the school's commitment to the Catholic tradition. Vibrant displays and focus areas, inside and outside classrooms, provide appropriate points to promote prayer.
- The school has developed a bespoke chapel which provides a unique resource for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on Mondays and Fridays each week, for personal prayer and reflection. Children independently use this facility to talk to God and to share their joys or troubles.
- The sex and relationships education programme (SRE) is established although this policy is currently being reviewed and updated. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibility of monitoring the programme.
- Strong relationships and mutual respect between leadership, staff and parents are a strong feature of the school. As a result, pastoral care for pupils is outstanding.
- Parents, governors and staff affirmed this high level of pastoral care, they offered personal and emotional accounts of support they have received.
- Senior leaders promote the highest standards of moral and ethical behaviour deeply rooted in Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic Church.

### **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school is Outstanding.**

- Governors offer significant support and challenge. They lead by example and offer a high level of practical involvement in the life of the school as well as demonstrating an excellent understanding of their strategic role. The impact of the Governors

Community Committee in holding the school to account for the Catholic life is a significant strength. In the annual appraisal process of the Headteacher, a specific target focuses on further development of the Catholic life of the school and Religious Education.

- Governors discharge their statutory and canonical duties extremely well.
- Governors are highly visible around the school. They are extremely supportive and confident in their ability to challenge. They have great confidence in the headteacher and the subject leader of Religious Education and are extremely proud of the school.
- The school Developing Excellence Plan rightly identifies two key priorities for development linked specifically to the Catholic life of the school.
- At all levels, the school’s leadership and management show a deep-rooted understanding and commitment to the Church’s mission. The desire and determination to promote the Catholic ethos, which recognises the unique value of every individual, underpins all aspects of school life.
- School leaders continually strive to maintain excellent links with the parish community. The school responds positively to feedback and works effectively to engage with parents and carers for the benefit of pupils and their families.
- Last year, pupils from Year 5 were invited to lead the Diocesan Good Shepherd presentation in Sheffield which was a very successful celebration.
- Parents/carers demonstrate a clear understanding of the school’s mission and appreciate the efforts made in school to maintain excellent levels of communication.
- Leaders and managers are passionately committed to the mission of the Church. They have a very strong sense of this mission and the school’s role in expressing it. They are extremely conscientious in their delivery, providing a strong sense of spiritual purpose, with a focus on ensuring the fullest personal development of all pupils.
- The promotion of an authentic Catholic ethos is seen as a fundamental role of the leadership team and is shared by the whole community who demonstrate great pride in their school.
- The Religious Education co-ordinator is a passionate and committed leader and promotes a variety of opportunities for pupils, staff and governors to be involved in the Catholic life of the school.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

**The quality of Religious Education is Good.**

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	Grade 2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education	Grade 2
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education	Grade 2



## **How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is Good**

- Religious Education is at the heart of the school curriculum and children's learning and is intricately linked with many subjects e.g. music, art and english.
- Children say they enjoy Religious Education; they have positive attitudes and speak enthusiastically about their learning, explaining how it helps them to understand how to live their lives.
- They are keen to do well and generally work at a good pace in lessons.
- Behaviour for learning throughout the school is excellent enabling good learning to take place.
- Pupils develop and apply a range of skills well, and as they reach upper key stage two are able to interpret sources, reflect and evaluate, engage with religious ideas and integrate them into their lives.
- Outcomes for pupils are good. Most pupils are making good progress in Religious Education within lessons and over time. Pupils start from average starting points and by the end of key stage two standards are broadly in line with the diocesan average.
- Evidence from book scrutiny and lesson observations generally show a good variety and range of learning activities where progress is evident.
- Pupils' attainment as supported by teacher assessment is good.

## **The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education is Good**

- Teaching is good overall and some outstanding; as a result most pupils make good progress over time.
- Consistent assessment procedures have been developed and high expectations are shared with pupils.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and continually strive to develop this even further through training offered by the diocese and the support of the Religious Education co-ordinator.
- Staff follow the 'Come and See' programme effectively to plan well-structured lessons, enhanced by the use of quality resources.
- Marking and feedback is in line with the school policy and largely identifies how the religious content can be further improved. However, not all staff consistently adhere fully to the policy.
- The school has introduced a 'Green for Growth' slip which is used to identify children's next steps in learning. However, these need to be more personalised in order that children at all levels may be extended and challenged, appropriately for their age and ability.
- In lessons, activities are sufficiently differentiated to meet the individual needs of most of the learners.
- Religious Education has a prominent profile throughout the school and figures highly in school improvement planning.
- A more rigorous tracking system is beginning to impact positively on children's progress and standards. This system now needs to be developed in order to carefully track groups of pupils to ensure they all make good and better progress.
- Teachers plan interesting activities which captivate the interest of pupils and ensure they are fully engaged and motivated.

- Targeted questioning is sometimes used well to assess understanding, monitor progress and reinforce learning.
- As a result pupils are motivated and engaged and demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning.
- Work in Religious Education is always marked. Teachers often ask pupils additional questions such as why is something important. However written feedback does not always respond to the learning objective or give guidance to pupils about how to move on in the next steps of their learning.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is Good.**

- The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops’ Conference and contributes very effectively to the pupils’ spiritual and moral development.
- The headteacher is fully committed and passionate about promoting the profile of Religious Education amongst staff, pupils, parents and parish.
- The subject leader of Religious Education is very committed, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic. She is well informed about current developments and has high expectations which she communicates effectively with staff on a regular basis during dedicated staff meetings.
- It is evident that Religious Education is highly regarded as a core subject within the school.
- Professional development is important and this is given high priority in many ways. Not only do staff attend diocesan courses, they share good practice within the school community and the Umbrella Trust.
- Governors now need to prioritise their involvement in the self-evaluation process both in the DSED and also in monitoring the quality of teaching and the impact of curriculum and assessment on pupil outcomes.

**COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

**The quality of Collective Worship is Outstanding.**

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship	<b>Grade 1</b>
The quality of provision for Collective Worship	<b>Grade 1</b>
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship	<b>Grade 1</b>

### **How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship is Outstanding.**

- All pupils at St Mary's respond very respectfully and thoughtfully when participating in Collective Worship in small and larger gatherings. Pupils act with reverence, reflect in silence and join in community prayers appropriately and with confidence.
- From an early age the pupils have a strong sense of what worship is about. The Reception children were being nurtured in the early stages of their involvement in worship by a very capable teacher and two highly skilled school chaplains. They were able to describe the season of Lent and understood why Jesus went into the desert.
- Pupils participate actively in the parish sacramental preparation programme following diocesan guidelines. In addition, the school is currently trialling 'Children of the Eucharist' ministry aimed at Year 3 pupils running alongside the parish programme for preparing children for their First Holy Communion.
- St. Mary's is a very prayerful and spiritual school where worship is a regular and meaningful part of the day. All pupils are inspired by, and enthusiastic in, their response to Collective Worship. This is evident in their keen participation in liturgies, particularly their gathering, joyful singing and prayerful reflection. They listen intently, show respect and offer heartfelt responses.
- Pupils are taking an increasing lead in planning, preparing and leading liturgies in class and larger groups throughout the school. They are confident in using resources and are developing a wide variety of prayer and liturgical styles which they choose to use appropriately.
- From the earliest ages pupils recognise seasons and colours of the liturgical year. They are aware that religious beliefs are important, demonstrating respect for their own faith and the faith of others.
- Adults provide excellent role models for pupils in their response and participation in liturgy and this is evident when pupils lead their own liturgies.

### **The quality of provision for Collective Worship is Outstanding.**

- Prayer is central to the life of St. Mary's and opportunities for children of other faith backgrounds to participate fully in prayer are looked upon as being of high importance.
- Prayer and acts of Collective Worship are given the highest priority and are a key feature of every day, and every school celebration, providing inspiration for staff and pupils.
- There is a clear policy for Collective Worship and a good range of structures to ensure that it is frequent, regular and inclusive.
- Collective Worship has a very clear structure and purpose and there are a variety of opportunities for staff and pupils to pray together.
- Collective Worship is carefully planned and resourced to enhance the worship experiences throughout the liturgical year. Pupils and adults praying together is a daily experience with parents and on occasions other adults are welcomed into this prayerful community.

- All leaders are passionate about ensuring that Collective Worship is of the highest quality and take every opportunity to model high quality liturgies: themes chosen reflect a deep understanding of the liturgical year.
- Parents, parishioners and governors are given further opportunities to share in the spiritual life of the school through various acts of Collective Worship, celebrations and weekly Mass celebrated in St. Mary's Church.
- The parish priest is a regular visitor to school and is well known to staff, pupils and parents. He reassuringly offers valuable guidance and support to staff in terms of their formation and development and his contribution is very highly welcomed and appreciated by all. He confirmed that St. Mary's is a 'Christ centred school'.
- There is an excellent working relationship with the Chaplain from St. Bernard's school who supports transition arrangements as well as working closely to promote chaplaincy across the Umbrella Trust.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship is Outstanding.**

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher, Religious Education co-ordinator and chaplains have set a very high standard for Collective Worship in school. They lead by example, ensuring that pupils and staff develop a deepening appreciation of the Church's traditions, seasons, rites and symbols and that prayerful, reflective opportunities contribute to the spiritual formation of pupils and staff.
- Senior leaders are passionate that liturgical and spiritual development are priorities for all in school and that appropriate time is devoted to this.
- The Religious Education co-ordinator has a very visible presence in school and a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in Collective Worship through both formal and informal monitoring.
- Leaders regularly seek the views of parents and staff and their responses are highly valued and lead to further developments.
- Leaders support staff to continually develop their skills in leading Collective Worship and in helping pupils to become more independent in their leadership.
- The school's life of prayer and worship is given high priority by the headteacher, staff and governors and is seen as the very heart and soul of the school.