

Report of the Denominational (Canon 806 & Section 48)
Inspection of
(Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School

DfE No: 935/3335

URN: 142806

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Matt Huke-Jenner

Headteacher: Alex Savage

Denominational Inspector: Jan Southgate

Dates of Inspection: 8th March 2018

Date and grade of previous inspection: November 2011 Grade 2

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School is a one form entry school for pupils 4-11 years. In May 2016 it became part of St. John the Baptist Catholic Multi-Academy Trust (CMAT). The school serves Our Lady Star of the Sea parish and currently has 212 pupils of which 63% are Catholic, 24% are from other Christian denominations and 1% from other world faiths. The majority of the pupils are from employed families with 74% White British, 15% from White other backgrounds, 6% Black / Black British and 3% Asian / Asian British and 1% Chinese. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is below the national average, as is the proportion of children with special educational needs and disabilities, and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Of the 11 full time and part time teachers for the 7 classes, 40% are Catholic.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL

St. Mary's School is a good school with outstanding features, particularly evident in its Catholic Life and within aspects of Collective Worship. Living out the Gospel values, together with the mission statement "we live life to the full, to become the best that we can be", permeates the daily life of the school. Staff are excellent role models for the pupils, and the vast majority of pupils support their peers in contributing to the thriving Catholic ethos. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher who is also the RE leader, work tirelessly with the level of dedication, enthusiasm and commitment to promote and inspire high standards of teaching and learning combining these with spiritual purpose, pastoral care and a living ethos of incorporating the teachings of the Catholic Church. This effectively impacts on the pupils' learning, spiritual growth and moral development as well as on positive relationships within the whole school community. Parents fully appreciate how well they are kept informed. They also commented very positively that the open communication with staff and the headteacher on the playground, supports the close links between the school and home. Pupils are inspired to give their best, and one pupil said, "what we do, we try to do as well as we can, and how respectful we are to each other, makes us become more like Jesus." An interim monitoring visit (IMV) took place in May 2016 and the recommendations for improvements have been addressed, with some aspects continuing to be further embedded. The senior leadership have a clear vision for their school and since the IMV, continue to be extremely proactive in planning and achieving sustained improvements. They work closely with the other schools within the CMAT and state that this supports them in their drive to achieve the highest standards of teaching and learning with the Catholic ethos at the very core.

What the school needs to do to improve further?

Grade 2

- Within the CMAT, as part of staff professional development, plan and develop opportunities for teachers to liaise with staff from the other schools to further enrich teaching and learning opportunities
- Plan opportunities for teachers to team teach and observe effective teaching styles already within the school, to enable consistency of pace of lessons and planning differentiated tasks to challenge more able pupils in Religious Education
- Further develop Religious Education within Pupil Asset to monitor and track the progress of all pupils in line with their attainment and identify gaps which can be addressed in future lesson planning
- Further develop pupils' responsibilities in leading Collective Worship, by Year 6 prayer leaders training future pupil leaders
- Within Collective Worship, introduce self-evaluation opportunities for pupils leading aspects of worship, and opportunities for other pupils to provide feedback

CATHOLIC LIFE:

Grade 1

Almost all pupils appreciate, value and participate in the Catholic Life and Mission of the school. They can readily explain and show understanding of their roles and responsibilities in organising and participating in activities which support the social teachings of the Church. Each year the school takes part in a poignant, reflective Holocaust Day and this year the pupils wrote 'Power of Words' postcards to a Holocaust survivor. These were written with such thoughtful compassion, care and empathy. The pupils also enjoy supporting charities with organised events and activities to raise money and awareness. Pupil's behaviour is good almost all of the time and a particular strength is the supportive encouragement peers give to each other in their learning and in their play. Because of this, pupils feel very safe, happy and greatly value being part of a loving and forgiving school community, which promotes their physical, emotional and spiritual growth. They deeply value and respect the traditions of the Catholic Church and enjoy the involvement within diocesan and parish celebrations and enrichment activities. They appreciate and respect the strong links with other Christian parishes and communities. A pupil remarked that "we are here to serve others" and they do this with confidence and enthusiasm.

All staff are committed to the educational mission of the Church, and to its implementation across the curriculum and the whole of the school life. There is a strong sense of community at all levels, evident in the high quality relationships that exist between colleagues, support staff and pupils. Staff participate in staff prayer, help lead collective worship, and the RE leader attends the diocesan professional development days to then train up staff through inset. In the meeting with a cross section of staff, there was clear evidence of their commitment to the Catholic life of the school. They mentioned participating in staff prayer, positive reinforcement of high standards of expectations in behaviour and learning and respect for the Church and its teachings. They also spoke of recognising the value of each other and a member of staff stated that "we all know and support each other especially when there are difficult personal issues in our lives." Another member of staff stated "the attitude in this school is amazing!" The parish priest and deacon encourage pupils and parents to participate in the Mass and several parents run the First Communion programme in the parish. Pupils are keen to be involved in the Mass and liturgies. The school effectively use a new high quality PSHE resource "R Time" which supports Catholic social teaching, and surveys have shown that most pupils have learnt more about human dignity and to care for our common home. The RSE "Journey in Love" is successfully implemented throughout the school.

The school's leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education and the Catholic life of the school is given the highest priority. Rigorous self-evaluation positively impacts on the vision for the school, and effective action planning leads to well targeted and achievable improvements. Continual professional development focussing on the Catholic life of the school is effective with staff involved in shaping and supporting the vision. The governing body have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and actively challenge and support the school leaders in the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' awareness, involvement and understanding of the Catholic life of the school. New initiatives include planning for a Parent Learning Café starting in the summer term and to establish a new Catholic Pre-school on the school site and plans are in process for this to be completed by September 2018.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

Grade 2

Most pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons and participate well, offering informed suggestions and ideas based on their good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum themes. They use appropriate religious vocabulary, and are most inspired when the lessons have pace, opportunities for discussion, peer interaction, role play and written opportunities independently and within a group task. A particular strength throughout the school is the pupils' awareness of bible stories and the messages and values they contain. Pupils use their knowledge and understanding to make comparisons and explain the characteristics. They make good progress in each key stage evident in their workbooks and in their writing activities within their progress books. Attainment is in line with English and Mathematics and it is clear that Religious Education is considered a core subject. The introduction of "Growth Mindset" has empowered pupils to think positively and to have confidence to "have a go" in their learning. "In the Pit" class displays encourage pupils to work outside their comfort zones. Within lesson observations, teachers actively reminded pupils of this style of learning. Teaching and learning is most effective in lessons which include a variety of different teaching styles and differentiated tasks which support all pupils including the more able pupils. One pupil stated that "kind teachers encourage you and cheer you on with your work."

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education is good. The school is taking part in the new national standards pilot which closely focusses on more specific and clearly defined targets for learning. Each pupil's attainment will be tracked for all of the Religious Education standards and assessment recorded using the Pupil Asset tracking system. The Headteacher and RE leader are committed to ensure that progress in Religious Education for all pupils will also be recorded and easily monitored within this system. This is a target within the RE Action Plan and in line with the CMAT current targets for improvement. Teachers are confident in teaching Religious Education due to the proactive inset organised by the RE leader. Teachers plan and manage the 10% time dedicated to the RE curriculum to secure good learning within individual lessons and across sequences of lessons. Religious Education is also taught in cross curricular opportunities, increasing the percentage of time given to this core subject. Interactive lessons and appropriate tasks engage learners and as a result, teaching is at least good and some teaching observed was outstanding. The school is well resourced for Religious Education and displays in each classroom reflect the quality of the RE lessons and prayer opportunities. Pupils' written work is acknowledged using a variety of styles of marking, and often offers opportunities for pupils to self-evaluate their work or answer a question which checks for further depth of understanding. To enhance this practice, it would be beneficial for pupils to have an 'I can' checklist of targets so they know and can aim for the next steps in their progress and achievement.

Leaders and governors ensure that 10% of the weekly taught curriculum is dedicated to Religious Education, and the teaching is based on the diocesan curriculum plan approved by the bishop. The RE leader carries out work scrutiny and lesson observations with the RE governor. One of the RE action plan targets is to ensure that within staff meetings all teachers take part in moderating pupils' workbooks to gain a more consistent overview of marking to inform and support pupil self-evaluation and to support staff in assessing pupils' weekly written work in line with the new national standards. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress and attainment in Religious Education during parent consultation evenings, and a survey given to parents after the meetings provide feedback to senior leaders.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:

Grade 2

Most pupils enjoy and show great respect and reverence within all forms of collective worship, both in school, and when attending parish Masses or other worship celebrations. They sing joyfully, reflect on voluntary prayers and join in community prayer confidently and appropriately. In the collective worship observed, a group of pupils, trained in the recently introduced “Mini Vinnies” led the prayerful worship with growing confidence and enjoyment. Pupils, one from each year group, were able to join the group and offer personal prayers which included prayers for a family friend, specific members of families and an injured family pet. The next step for the “Mini Vinnies” is to train up another year group to lead worship. The headteacher and a member of staff led the music and the hymn chosen reflected four of the school values, love, peace hope and joy. All pupils showed reverence throughout the worship, and a particular strength evidenced was their knowledge of the penitential prayer “I confess” which they said without any prompting or visual aid. When I mentioned this to the pupils in our meeting, one pupil said that “we learn the prayers and responses to help us when we go to Mass.”

Collective worship is central to the life of the school. Sacramental opportunities and praying together is a part of the daily experience for all pupils and staff. Collective worship takes place in a variety of prayerful forms including celebration themes and each week a year group attend the parish morning Mass. The parish priest and deacon, in our meeting, spoke with enthusiasm about the support from parents and how pupils within the parish are trained in altar serving and reading as well as joining the offertory procession. They stated that prayer and music offered within the school’s collective worship were particular strengths and pupils show great empathy for each other especially when taking part in the sacraments. The priest and deacon felt that an aspect to be developed, due to the pupils’ prayerful responses, would be the introduction of meditative prayer for the whole school. Themes chosen for worship reflect a good understanding of the liturgical seasons and the Catholic character of the school, also evident in the displays throughout the school environment. During the school year, pupils have the opportunity to worship with other Christians at “Christians Together” events, held in different churches within the town. Pupils enjoy learning about other faiths with visitors and visits to holy places of worship. These enrichment activities support pupils in their respect, knowledge and understanding of worship within other faiths. These experiences also promote and develop pupils’ spiritual, moral and social development as they progress through the school.

Senior leaders are excellent role models for pupils leading worship and promoting pupil leadership of worship. Their deep personal faith and commitment is shared openly and appropriately which inspires and impacts on all members of the school community with their own personal faith journeys. A member of staff described the religious aspects of the school as a “real living thing.” The school website displays evidence of the rich variety of worship opportunities which enhance the experiences for pupils, not only in collective worship, but also contributing to the Catholic life of the school. Senior leaders and governors have identified the need to formalise worship observations and evaluations to support the planning and development of future worship aspirations. One example of the many celebrations includes the support of the diocesan “Ignite” team, who visit many of the diocesan schools to promote faith worship in an inspiring and lively way.

The inspector wishes to thank the headteacher, RE leader and school community for their very warm welcome and contribution to her very enjoyable and informative visit.



EAST ANGLIA DIOCESAN SCHOOLS' SERVICE

*Director of Schools' Service: Mrs Julie O'Connor
The White House, 21 Upgate,
Poringland, NR14 7SH
Tel 01508 495509 Fax: 01508 495358*

Letter to pupils explaining the findings from the Diocesan Inspection

14th March 2018

Dear Pupils

Diocesan Inspection of St. Mary's Catholic Primary School

Thank you very much for making me so welcome to your school on Thursday 8th March, and thank you to all of the pupils who met with me to tell me about your school and how you worship and work together. I was very interested to see you all participate and enjoy your prayerful worship led by the Mini Vinnies, as well as the wonderfully prayerful singing of the hymn which reflected four of your school values. I enjoyed seeing you participate in your RE lessons and having the opportunity to talk with you whilst you were working in class.

Here are some of the things I especially liked:

- The senior leaders and governors, together with your teachers, ensure that you all have the opportunity to grow in faith and wisdom within the strong Catholic ethos of your school.
- The way you respond to challenges within your RE lessons, work hard and enjoy learning.
- You are very caring and considerate with each other, you listen to each other, and your behaviour is very good, especially when coming into and during worship.
- The school provides good opportunities for you to develop spiritually, morally and socially as well as academically.

I have asked your teachers to consider giving you a next steps in progress sheet to put in your RE workbook which has "I Can" targets for you to achieve, so you know how well you are learning. I have also asked that you train up other pupils in different year groups to help with presenting prayer celebrations, and that you have opportunities to give feedback and ideas to the pupils leading worship.

Thank you again for your friendly welcome and help. I wish you all continuing success in all that you do.

Yours sincerely,

Jan Southgate,
Diocesan Inspector