CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INSPECTION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND ACADEMIES

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 142806

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of East Anglia

25 June 2026 – 26 June 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

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 RE

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

This Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection was carried out under canons 804 & 806 of the code of canon law. For maintained schools and academies in England it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.48 of the Education Act 2005. For maintained schools and academies in Wales it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.50 of the Education Act 2005.

What the school does well

- The school is an inclusive and welcoming community where each individual is valued as being in the image of God.
- Respectful relationships are seen and modelled by all members of the school community.
- Pupils show great skill in ministry and in planning the prayer and liturgical life of the school.
- Leadership at all levels, from pupils to governors, puts Christ and Catholic social teaching at the heart of the school.
- Staff are confident in the implementation of the Religious Education Directory and have been well supported by the school, trust and diocese.

What the school needs to improve

- To systematically identify the principles of Catholic social teaching across the curriculum outside of religious education in order for pupils to deepen their understanding of how to apply them in the world.
- To give pupils planned opportunities to work independently in religious education so they can show the depth of their understanding.
- To develop a system for pupil leaders to train and encourage other younger prayer leaders in the 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

1

Pupil outcomes

1

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

Provision

1

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

Leadership

1

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

St Mary's is a school where pupils are happy and work together to live out their mission statement to "be the best they can be for themselves and others". They take pride in nominating each other to be "leaves" on a vine displayed in the school entrance when they live out the school values. One child commented, "It makes me happy when my friend gets nominated." Pupils show a strong understanding of how their actions impact their local community and beyond into the global community. They actively embrace the responsibility to make changes to their world, contributing to the school's Eco-award by cleaning up the local beach and park, and teaching their parents about how they do this through events like the parent cafes. Even the younger children are able to make explicit links between their actions and the Catholic Social Teaching principle behind it. The Mini Vinnie team planned and produced a regular "legend" award for their peers who have shown that they can live out the principles of Catholic social teaching.

Pupils and staff can express how the mission statement is lived out in the community. One staff member said, "Our mission is not just effective for our children but also for our staff." Weekly assemblies focus on individual school values, which provide a focus for prayer throughout the week. Staff are strong role models. Relationships between staff and pupils clearly bear witness to the uniqueness of each child, and staff show their commitment to providing the best for all pupils through events outside of the classrooms as well as during school time. They lead events linked to Beach School and contribute to whole-school displays, accompany pupils to sing at local care homes and set up a "giving tree" to provide tailored gifts for its residents. The Eco group helps to make sure that secondhand uniform is not

wasted and that those who need it have access to it. Key Stage 2 pupils asked to set up a sign language club which they now run at lunchtime each week. Pastoral support is provided to a high level, and the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met with dignity and compassion. Relationships, sex and health education is carefully planned and meets statutory and diocesan requirements.

Leaders and governors place the schools' Catholic life firmly at the centre of all that is done. It is clear in the displays around the school building and in the relationships found within it. They work with their partner school, the trust and the diocese to ensure the provision for Catholic life and mission extends to all in the community and is as inclusive as it can be. The school works closely with the local parish and the parish priest is a regular and popular visitor to the school. Parents are welcomed into the school on many occasions such as parent cafes but are especially welcome at school Masses. One commented, "The school Masses I attend as a parent are wonderful. Hearing all the children singing together is beautiful." School leaders and governors ensure that Catholic social teaching is lived out in its decision making, for example, providing increased pastoral support and interventions in response to changing needs. Staff also speak highly of the support and care shown to them. School leaders make choices which ensure that finances are channeled to support those in the community who most need it.

Religious education

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 key judgement grade

2

Pupil outcomes

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

2

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education

The Religious Education Directory has been introduced across the whole school, and pupils show age-appropriate knowledge and understanding of it. They make steady progress and show that they are confident in making links with what they have already learned. Pupils are able to use correct vocabulary and use their growing religious literacy to respond in class, where they are keen to show their understanding. Pupils take pride in their work, and presentation across all year groups is strong, with modelling clear in all books. Pupils enjoy their lessons and consequently make good progress. Support is provided through scaffolding or by discrete additional support for those who need it, but some pupils would benefit from less structure in order to show just how deep their understanding is. They behave well in lessons, in one class responding positively to the request to "...work quietly to show respect for others who are learning". Recent pupil voice work has focused on supporting pupils to better understand what their next steps in learning are. The same survey was clear that "lessons are fun... they help us to help the world (and) we learn about God." Achievement in religious education is in line with that of other core subjects.

Teachers are confident in the implementation of the Religious Education Directory and have been well supported by the subject lead and senior team in the planning of their lessons. Lessons are sequenced well to build on prior learning from previous years as well as previous lessons. Teachers with mixed-year-group classes have shown that they are able to adapt and meet the additional challenges this brings. Teachers communicate through their lessons the importance of religious education, and this enjoyment and sense of discovery is responded to

by the pupils. All pupils comment on the variety within religious education lessons, especially enjoying the opportunity to learn through different creative forms such as music and drama. They are introduced to many different artistic styles through engaging with artwork related to their topics. One pupil commented, “I like learning in RE because we get to do drawing and music”. Assessment is used to inform planning, and feedback is used to help inform next steps, and these are beginning to provide some opportunities for deeper thinking. QR codes are used to record unwritten evidence of learning. Homework is set where appropriate, for example, one class made Lego churches to bring in and share. Many opportunities for reflection and prayer are taken during lessons.

School leaders have taken advantage of all support available at trust and diocesan level to ensure that teachers are confident and knowledgeable in the rollout of the Religious Education Directory, and this is reflected in the good standards seen in lessons and in books. Staff comment on how much support they have had, one saying, “Our religious education lead has worked extremely hard … to promote religious education and Catholic teaching across the school and is always willing to support other members of staff”. Religious education is well resourced, with professional development available to all staff to continue to improve their work, often directly linked to the current round of monitoring. The curriculum has been well planned with many enriching experiences for pupils, and leaders have begun to look ahead to see what impact mixed year groups may have on the curriculum design and to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to develop their deeper understanding and knowledge. Monitoring and evaluation is carried out by the religious education lead, senior team and governors, and feeds into subject and whole school development plans. They have also provided evidence for the published diocesan exemplars.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade

1

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

Pupils participate fully in the prayer life of the school; they join in prayers and sing with enthusiasm. Prayer leaders in each class are confident in leading their peers in prayer, with a well-known and understood format used by all. They are confident to make choices of scripture and music and can show that they can link these to the Gospel value and Catholic social teaching principle shared at the start of the week. They are confident in composing and sharing their own prayers and using silence and reflection time as appropriate. All pupils get the opportunity to be leaders over the year, and all pupils are included in all prayer and liturgy. The same learning strips, using visual clues used by pupils in lessons, are used in prayer. Pupil voice is regularly collected to help pupils reflect on the quality of their experiences and to assist staff in making improvements. Mini Vinnies take on a more whole-school approach, preparing bidding prayers for Mass and recently re-writing the school prayer. Pupils can talk with confidence about how prayer makes them feel and naturally include each other and the wider community in their prayers.

There is a daily pattern of prayer across the school which is valued by all. A class learning about the Muslim Salah immediately said, "We pray 3 times a day". A clear weekly pattern of prayer feeds into an annual plan which in turn follows the liturgical year. Christmas Nativity plays and Stations of the Cross during Lent give pupils the opportunity to participate in different forms of worship. Masses are held in school to mark holy days of obligation and other feast days. A highlight of the year is when other Trust schools join in with Mass followed by a picnic on the beach. Staff are skilled in supporting the pupils in planning and leading prayer and model it themselves in weekly liturgies. The religious education leader supports

the staff and also works with the Mini Vinnies in their mission. This year, they decided to celebrate “King for a day” to mark the Feast of the Epiphany. Music plays a large part in worship, and weekly liturgies are enhanced with bespoke artwork produced by a staff member.

School leaders and governors have produced a clear policy on prayer and liturgy which is backed up by a thorough annual plan of provision. This ensures that pupils and staff experience a full range of prayer and liturgy and also supports them in participating in it as fully as they can. Key events in the school and Trust life are marked, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered each Lent. Despite the church being too far to walk to, the parish priest ensures that he brings Mass to the school which includes even more of the parent community. Professional development for staff is well planned and uses both school and Diocesan input. The Ignite youth group provides retreats for Year 6 and training for Mini Vinnies alongside marking other events in the Church year. The prayer life of the school is well resourced. Each class has a prayer table with age-appropriate displays and prayer boxes and books for the children to contribute to. There is a clear monitoring and evaluation schedule in place for prayer and liturgy, and this includes regular pupil voice.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	142806
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9353335
Full postal address of the school	Kirkley Cliff Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 0DG
School phone number	01502 565384
Executive Headteacher	Mrs Helen Armstrong
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Abigail Goddard
Chair of Governors	Mr Jeremy Gaskell
School Website	www.stmarysrcps.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St John The Baptist
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	08 March 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The Inspection Team

Catherine McMahon	Lead
Veronica Harvey	

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