



St Mary's RC Primary School

Meadowside, Sunderland, SR2 7QN

School Unique Reference Number: **108840**

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| Inspection dates: | 03 – 04 July 2019 |
| Lead inspector: | John Hattam |
| Team inspector: | Andrew Ramanandi |

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| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Catholic Life: | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Religious Education: | | Good | 2 |
| Collective Worship: | | Good | 2 |

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Mary's RC Primary School is a good Catholic school because:

- The quality of Religious Education is good. Most pupils from their varied starting points, including those with special educational needs make good progress. Behaviour in lessons is outstanding and most pupils enjoy Religious Education.
- The quality of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. At St Mary's pupils are alert to the needs of others and seek justice for all within and beyond the school community. The Rights Respecting agenda is a force for good at St Mary's.
- The quality of Collective Worship is good. Adult led Collective Worship has a purposeful message and direction. The themes chosen for worship reflect a good understanding of the liturgical seasons and the Catholic character of the school.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Mary's is a large primary school serving the newly formed parish of Our Lady of Mercy, Sunderland. There are currently 462 pupils on roll.
- The percentage of baptised Catholics is 95%.
- Almost all pupils come from a white British background.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is lower than the national figure.
- The proportion of pupils with a special educational need is lower than the national figure.
- There have been a number of changes in leadership since the last inspection. A new permanent headteacher has been appointed for September 2019.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- The school needs to improve the quality of Religious Education by:
 - ensuring that all teachers are planning learning sequences that challenge all pupils, so that outcomes for pupils in Religious Education match those in other areas of the curriculum.
 - supporting the Religious Education coordinator to carefully monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in Religious Education so that plans for improvement are thorough, lead to improvement and are shared with all stakeholders.
- The school needs to improve the quality of Collective Worship by:
 - increasing the opportunities for all pupils to plan and lead a variety of Collective Worship.
 - ensuring that rigorous monitoring and evaluation takes place which informs development plans.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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

- Pupils benefit greatly from the Catholic Life of the school to which they make an outstanding contribution.
- Pupils have a deep sense of belonging at St Mary's and describe being, 'all one big family'.
- Pupils wholeheartedly appreciate, value and participate in the Catholic Life of the school with the mission statement, 'Growing, loving and learning in the arms of Mary' central to the daily routines. Parents appreciate the Marian culture of the school which they feel is, 'at the centre of spiritual and faith formation of children'.
- Pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of the importance of how they live their lives and how they treat others. Pupils are happy, confident and secure in their own stage of spiritual growth, demonstrating exemplary behaviour towards adults and each another.
- Pupils are at the heart of school celebrations and, through very strong links with Our Lady of Mercy, they worship with parishioners at St Cecilia's, St Mary's and the Convent of Mercy. Parents and governors value these links.
- Pupils willingly and eagerly take on positions of responsibility and leadership within the school. This includes the work of the Mini-Vinnies and the Eco-Group. Pupils confidently talk about the various causes they support, effectively promoting the Catholic character of the school, such as CAFOD, Fair Trade and a Justice and Peace project collecting tins for the homeless charity Open Home. Most recently participation in the Race for Life to raise money for cancer research was particularly well-supported and held special meaning for the pupils.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The Catholic values of the school are given the highest priority and are embedded in the daily life of St Mary's. These values underpin the work which has enabled the school to achieve Gold Rights Respecting School status and the Well-Being Chartermark.
- Excellent relationships exist within the school community with all stakeholders fully committed to making the school the best that it can be. Staff, governors, parents and pupils are all encouraged to be involved in school life and communication is a strength of the school.

- The school is a very prayerful community where all members of the community feel welcomed. Parents comment, 'St Mary's helps us as parents to prepare our children for future mission'. There is a strong sense of family and parents take advantage of any opportunities to worship and pray with their children.
- St Mary's is a school committed to Catholic tradition and ethos. The Catholic character of the school is evident in the creative displays and sacred spaces featured around the school. Representation of Our Lady is a visible presence throughout school and the annual May procession provides strong witness to this.
- Clear policies and procedures are in place which are carefully planned to reflect the Catholic Life of the school for both pupils and staff. They provide high levels of support for pupils, staff and the wider community.
- High expectations of behaviour are promoted by all staff and pupils alike. This is seen in all classrooms and around the school. Governors are proud that these attitudes are a manifestation of pupils' wider faith.
- The school takes full advantage of the Church's seasons as well as local and national initiatives to seize every opportunity to help others. There is an explicit commitment to the most vulnerable and the poor with regular fundraising and food collections.
- The relationships and sex education programme has recently been reviewed following the Diocesan model and parental engagement in the recent consultation was very strong.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- Leaders and managers throughout the school are instrumental in ensuring that the Church's mission in education is lived and breathed by all connected with the school. They articulate well their desire that, 'Children leave St Mary's knowing their place in the world and are aware of the talents and gifts they offer with a real sense of vocation'.
- Governors have an excellent grasp of the challenges faced by the school and work very effectively with the leadership team. They represent both churches in the Parish of Our Lady of Mercy and are active within the school community. They fully participate in the Catholic Life of the school.
- Leaders are highly ambitious for all children and are excellent role models. All are motivated and enthusiastic about the next phase of the journey that the school is on with a new leadership structure in place from September.
- The impact of this leadership is evident across the school with staff and pupils mirroring the outstanding examples that have been given to them.
- Parents and carers have a clear understanding of the school's mission due to school engagement.
- Governors are knowledgeable and capable of holding the leadership team to account whilst being actively involved in supporting its mission; they have real expertise and benefit from having a particularly effective link governor. The Catholic Life of the school is monitored by all stakeholders to inform priorities and evaluate success.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is good.

- Most pupils from their varied starting points make good progress across school although the rate of progress is not consistent across classes or key stages.
- Most pupils relative to their age and capacity are religiously literate. Pupils in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 were able to use their knowledge, understanding and skills to reflect spirituality during whole class discussions. The quality of class discussions was not always reflected in pupils' responses in books; tasks were sometimes too narrow which prevented pupils from expressing themselves.
- As a result of the Rights Respecting agenda and the Eco Council, pupils are able to think ethically and are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.
- During the inspection, pupils were interested and engaged in Religious Education lessons. They worked diligently at the tasks they were given. Pupils in key stage 2 were particularly engaged by their topic, Our Common Home. Some pupils spoke about enjoying Religious Education and said that it helped them to learn more about Jesus.
- Behaviour observed during the inspection was outstanding with pupils rarely off task even with extended periods without direction from an adult. Pupils worked well with each other during Religious Education lessons, sharing ideas and challenging each other to be the best they can be.
- Pupil attainment in Religious Education has fluctuated over recent years and the most recent outcomes for pupils at St Mary's are much lower when compared to diocesan data.
- Pupils in key stage 2 told the inspectors that they enjoy assessing how well they have done in an area of study using their success criteria checklists.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good.

- Teachers plan consistently good lessons so that most pupils learn well. Most teachers make good use of current assessments and their knowledge of the individual pupils to consolidate and extend knowledge and understanding and as a result of this, teaching is mainly good.
- Teachers who are confident in the subject are able to understand how pupils learn best; they are able to ensure that pupils apply themselves well and make good progress over time.

- The best teachers at St Mary's employ a range of appropriate strategies that allow pupils to learn at pace including individual tasks, paired work and group work. Pupils are motivated by the variety of learning opportunities on offer in some classes and as a consequence levels of concentration are high.
- Since the last inspection teachers have worked hard to ensure that pupils are much more involved in evaluating how well they are achieving. Good quality feedback leads to engagement, pupils spoke with confidence about how they now know how to improve work through feedback.
- In most lessons teachers communicate high expectations about Religious Education to their pupils who respond positively. In a minority of lessons observed teachers did not manage time effectively, consequently some pupils were passive rather than active learners.
- Good quality resources, including other adults, are used effectively to optimise learning for most pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in school.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is good.

- Leaders and governors ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishop's Conference in every respect and in each key stage.
- Leaders ensure Religious Education compares favourably with other core subjects in terms of professional development, staffing, resources and time.
- Leaders including governors consulted widely with parents and other stakeholders when developing, implementing and promoting the new relationships and sex education programme.
- As a direct result of changes in leadership at St Mary's, self-evaluation of Religious Education is not as accurate as it should be. Leaders must ensure that frequent monitoring and analysis lead to robust strategic plans for improvement for Religious Education. Changes to key leaders have been made to ensure that this is in place from September 2019.
- The current Religious Education coordinator has worked hard over time to ensure that the quality of Religious Education is good.
- High quality sacramental preparation is a strength of St Mary's. The programme is well-led in school and ably supported by a conscientious team of volunteer catechists in the parish with over 60 pupils involved in this year's celebration.
- Governors are regular visitors to school and have worked with successive headteachers to promote Religious Education.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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

- During the inspection pupils were observed taking part in Collective Worship in class groups and all together in the school hall. Most pupils acted with reverence and were keen to participate in community prayer or singing.
- Pupils lead class worship which has a fixed, four-part structure (gather, word, response and going forth). This model could be seen across school. Pupils were confident choosing scripture from a bag of possible appropriate passages or a method of gathering from a small menu of options. Pupils in key stage 1 sang joyfully during class worship and enjoyed sharing 'The Word' with their friends.
- Most pupils have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons and feasts. Many pupils attend mass at their local church or the convent and are aware of the structure and requirements of more formal forms of worship.
- Worship across school is sometimes pupil initiated, however there is sometimes a lack of variety in approach to worship. Pupils are therefore not always engaged or inspired by worship.
- The experience of living and working in a faith filled community with strong links through parents, carers, governors and the clergy to the parish has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of many pupils.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is good.

- The quality of Collective Worship observed across school during the inspection was variable. Where it was strong, inspectors observed worship which was pupil led, appropriate, prayerful, inspirational and uplifting.
- Collective Worship is part of the life of St Mary's and included in almost all school celebrations. The themes chosen for Collective Worship reflect a good understanding of the liturgical seasons and the Catholic character of the school. Pupils, parents and governors talked with pride about celebrating the month of May, which is dedicated to Our Lady. They described whole school Collective Worship, a May procession which engages the local community. This acts as an outward sign of the school's Catholic identity.
- Relevant staff have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts and ensure that pupils have a good experience of the Church's liturgical life.

- Staff are skilled in helping pupils to plan and deliver quality worship. They have a good understanding of the purpose of Collective Worship and the wide variety of methods and styles of prayer.
- Opportunities for Collective Worship are planned in a manner that facilitates attendance by other adults and the response to this invitation is good.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship is good.

- At St Mary's, leaders and managers know how to deliver quality Collective Worship. They are visible leaders of Collective Worship in school.
- Leaders at St Mary's have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts.
- Leaders at St Mary's are skilled at making the seasons and the feasts of the Church accessible to pupils in a contemporary context.
- Leaders have promoted pupils planning, delivering and leading Collective Worship but at present the framework for this is restrictive and lacks depth and variety. Leaders need to spend more time evaluating the impact of the experience of Collective Worship at St Mary's.
- Monitoring of Collective Worship is carried out informally and has been focused on ensuring that acts of worship have a uniform structure across school.
- In the absence of a permanent headteacher, leaders have been unable to establish rigorous systems for ensuring that the professional development of all staff has remained a key priority.
- Governors at St Mary's have the skills and knowledge necessary to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation of Collective Worship is given the highest priority and that school leaders at all levels are held to account.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

HOW EFFECTIVE THE SCHOOL IS IN PROVIDING CATHOLIC EDUCATION:**2****CATHOLIC LIFE:****1**

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

1

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

1

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**2**

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

2

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

2

How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

2

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**2**

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.

2

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

2

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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SCHOOL DETAILS

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| School name | St Mary's RC Primary School |
| Unique reference number | 108840 |
| Local authority | Sunderland |
| This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt Reverend Robert Byrne the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle under canon 806 of Canon Law. For voluntary aided schools it also fulfils the responsibility the governing body has to inspect the school under s48 of the Education Act 2005. | |
| Chair of governors | Mr Stephen Armstrong |
| Executive headteacher | Mrs Reilly O'Donnell |
| Date of previous school inspection | January 2014 |
| Telephone number | 01915228787 |
| Email address | info@smrc.school |