

**INSPECTION REPORT**

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**Inspection carried out Under Canon 806  
and in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005**

**Name of School**      **St Mary's RC Primary School, Lime Road, Haslingden, Lancashire, BB4 5NP**

Inspection date      12<sup>th</sup> February, 2019

Reporting Inspectors      Dennis Harrison, Patty Ganley and Helen Arnold

Type of school	Primary
URN	119663
Age range of pupils	4-11
Number on roll	142
Appropriate authority	The Governing Board
Chair of Governors	James McMahan
Headteacher	Donna McNicoll
Religious Education Subject Leaders	Kathryn Leedam / Donna McNicoll
Date of previous inspection	March 2014

<b>The Inspection judgements are:</b>	<b>Grade</b>	Explanation of the Grades
Overall effectiveness of the school	1	1 = Outstanding 2 = Good 3=Requires Improvement 4 = Inadequate
Catholic Leadership	1	
The Catholic Life of the school (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness)	1	
Religious Education (incorporating Word)	1	
Collective Worship	1	
The following pages provide reasons to support these judgements		

## **CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL**

St Mary's is a small Roman Catholic school serving the parish of St Marie, in the township of Haslingden, Lancashire and its surrounding area. It has 142 pupils on roll. Some of the wards that the school serves are relatively disadvantaged and 20% of pupils are entitled to pupil premium funding. The school's population is relatively stable with few children leaving the school. However movement into the school is higher. 12.6% of children are registered as having a Special Educational Need or Disability and one child has an Education, Health and Care plan. 63% of the children are baptised Catholic, whilst overall about half of the staff are Catholic. The headteacher has the CCRS, is a National Leader of Education, a Diocesan Leader of Education and has been in post since 2007. The school provides support to many schools both in Lancashire and across the Diocese and is nominated as a National Support School. The school was graded as outstanding in its last Section 5 report in 2013.

## **THE KEY STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL INCLUDE:**

- **The passionate and caring commitment of all staff that ensures the children witness the love of God each day.**
- **The outstanding Catholic leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by leaders at all levels, who guide St Mary's forward with devotion and dedication.**
- **The wonderful children of St Mary's who are excellent examples of 'missionary disciples' bringing hard work, joyful attitudes and big hearts to their work every day.**
- **The culture of high expectations leading to outstanding outcomes in Religious Education, impressive opportunities to deepen faith and the recognition of every child's special gifts.**

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL is OUTSTANDING**

Beyond doubt there is something very special taking place at St Mary's, Haslingden! This is an outstandingly effective Catholic school. It is little surprise that parents value all that the school offers because they know that the staff, under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, set no limits in making the school a joyful, Christ centred place where only the best is good enough. Very high expectations sit comfortably next to outstanding care and welcome. The prayerful day to day mission of the school ensures every child confidently progresses, especially in Religious Education, and enjoys being respected and valued as a unique person. Their days at school are full of fun and excitement. Each child, and their spiritual development, is at the heart of everything the school does. Religious Education is at the core of the curriculum and is taught to a very high standard resulting in very positive outcomes. It is true that the children meet God each day at St Mary's because the mission of the school is heartfelt, with the expectation that the Word of God is central to learning and the desire for 'ordinary people to do extraordinary things'. This prayerful community is ready to enhance its provision for Worship even further. Its undoubted successes as a thriving Catholic school needs to celebrate unreservedly the impact of excellent leadership decisions, the exciting plans for the future and the investment into the school and those who work there.

## **THE QUALITY OF CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP is OUTSTANDING**

The headteacher is a true guardian of the outstanding Catholic provision that has been lovingly nurtured over many years at St Mary's, Haslingden. Hence this small, close knit school impacts so positively on the lives of its young people and their families. She brings a drive and commitment that inspires the whole community in a common purpose to provide a truly special experience, steeped in Gospel values, whereby each day brings new joys and challenges. The deputy headteacher and Religious Education subject leader are absolutely in tune with these high expectations and support and encourage all staff in embracing the school's very high ambitions. Hence there is a magnetic sense of purpose, founded on the school's banner strapline, 'Our school, our family, modelled on Christ'. All pupils and staff fully embrace the school's Catholic mission, living and breathing its core purpose and hence are proud to belong to this school community. Governors play a strong role

in the school's successes and find a subtle balance between support and challenge. They are very committed in their work and know the school well. They set leaders free to find ways to improve continually as a thriving Catholic school providing so well for the hopes and dreams of each child. Based on these successes the school is right to extend its self-evaluation statements to state clearly its next steps on its inspirational journey, the Catholic professional development of staff and the celebration of the impact of initiatives undertaken. Pupil leadership is emerging very well and impacts very positively on school life. This sets a course for the children to take an ever increasing leadership role in Worship, Word and the Catholic life of the school as they are trusted and capable stewards for their school.

### **THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL (incorporating Welcome, Welfare and Witness) is OUTSTANDING**

A warm, family atmosphere permeates St Mary's, Haslingden. Parents express clearly how they are welcomed into school and how responsive the staff are in addressing any concerns or worries. This has led to a tangible sense of togetherness. Therefore parents hold the school in high esteem, feeling a valued part of each child's faith journey and express how the influence of the school's Catholic traditions have benefitted their own lives. Visitors to the school also praise the special feel of the school, one saying, 'I was astounded by the confidence, maturity, kindness and respect the children have for one another, they spoke articulately about the values held by the school, the trusting relationships they have with all adults and the actions taken to ensure they are safe and happy'. Children enter school each morning with a spring in their step as they are met with a wall of smiles, each child personally greeted by name. Hence relationships are extremely positive. Children who recently joined the school commented most favourably on coming to St Mary's saying the teachers are lovely and lessons are fun! The school demonstrates a high level of respect and care for everyone as people made in the image and likeness of God. The children not only behave beautifully, they bestow their affection for the youngest and most vulnerable with confidence and care, rightly being witnesses to the love of God as 'missionary disciples'. They understand fully the implications of the school's strapline, 'Our school, our family, modelled on Christ'. The Catholic life of the school is founded on a keen spirit of teamwork and guided by the high expectations of the headteacher. She correspondingly takes motivation and inspiration from the energy, enthusiasm and effectiveness of the staff. This was clearly evident in the passionate involvement of the staff in all parts of the inspection day, busily ensuring that the excellent qualities they experience every day were there to be witnessed. Attitudes to learning and to school life, alongside a 'lived out' attention to Gospel values, are exemplary. The school follows the Diocesan guidelines for SRE by the use of an approved scheme.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (incorporating Word) is OUTSTANDING**

From starting points below that which is expected nationally the children make consistent and positive progress in Religious Education and by the time they reach upper Key Stage 2 they are achieving well beyond the expected level. This is evidenced by the high quality of work in the children's books and the highly developed Religious Literacy witnessed during the inspection. Teaching observed across the school was at least good and in a majority of cases was judged outstanding. In a Key Stage one class the children were considering The Last Supper and demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding. This was superbly enhanced by skilful, engaging and searching questioning by the teacher. In an Upper Key Stage 2 class a study into the Lord's Prayer, based on Unity with God, used clever scrutiny of Sacred Scripture to gain a deep understanding of the lesson. Across the school teaching is well planned, pacy and engaging, meaning the children have a thoroughly enjoyable experience in Religious Education leading to high outcomes. Learning is brought alive by creative use of 'Big Questions' to ask children to think deeply. In one class the children were examining different pictures of the Last Supper and could link their learning to the Seder meal, the story of the Passover and the feelings of the disciples at the meal. The strong teaching witnessed during the inspection clearly makes learning thought provoking, fun and rewarding. Assessment across the school is developing very well and the Religious Education subject leader has engaged both with the local Catholic schools and the Diocese to ensure the school is in a very strong position to introduce fully the emerging National framework. The school is adorned with many attractive displays and Religious Education focus areas. The Forest area is used well and is considered a focus area for learning. The Mission Statement of the school is annually reviewed each September ensuring it is refreshed, lived and witnessed.

### **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP is OUTSTANDING**

St Mary's have moved along significantly with their provision of Collective Worship and have an honest and forward thinking approach of the journey so far. The children are very comfortable to sit in the presence of God because staff model and encourage them to share of themselves and have taught every child 'how to pray'. When the school come together to pray

there is a sense of calm, magnificent singing and a keen desire to participate. These are joyful experiences. A new policy places Worship at the heart of the school community and the school is right in its determination to share Worship with parents and families regularly. The younger children can sit and pray reverently under the guidance of their teachers. As they reach Key Stage 2 the school develops the skills of staff and pupils by using the 'Lectio Divina' approach and other appropriate strategies to help children grow in their relationship with God. The importance of prayer is exemplified by the resourcing of special areas in every classroom, the outdoor worship area, the nature area and the Stations of the Cross around the playground. The older children, especially the GIFT chaplaincy team, love leading prayer and are ready to embed this strong practice further so that everyone can take a special responsibility in preparing a variety of prayer opportunities, lead them independently and ask for positive feedback so that their skills develop even further. Moments of quiet stillness are considered precious and it is very much to the credit of these mature and articulate children that they have seen how they wish to grow in faith and grow closer to God. This outstanding school naturally looks beyond its gates to share excellent practice, blending the balance between providing support to others whilst earnestly seeking ways to develop further its own practice.

#### **AGREED AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- **To ensure the school's self-evaluation is fully shared and incorporates clear statements of impact, next steps for improvement and development for the school and those who work there.**
- **To deepen further the prayer experiences of pupils, staff and families by continuing to embed and enrich the established comprehensive provision for Worship.**