



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Hunter Road, Cannock, Staffordshire, WR11 0AE

Inspection dates
Reporting Inspector

9th – 10th November 2015
Ms Julie-Anne Tallon

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	Nursery-Year 6
Number on roll	234
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Fr Patrick Brennan
Telephone number	01543 510380
E-mail address	headteacher@st-marys-cannock.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	July 2010
DFE School Number	860/3456
Unique Reference Number	124349

Headteacher

Mr Stephen Breeze

Previous inspection: 2

This inspection: 2

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



St Mary's Catholic Primary School Cannock

Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by 1 Diocesan Inspector.
- The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of religious education (RE) and Catholic life.
- Documentation shared with the inspector included the school self evaluation document, RAISEonline , the school development plan, teachers' planning, learning walks, RE journals, lesson observations, work scrutiny overviews, Sacramental preparation folders and pupil and parent questionnaires.
- To validate the effectiveness of the school's self evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspector and headteacher carried out joint lesson observations in Year 3, 5 and 6 and visited the Nursery.
- The inspector observed a Year 3 pupil led prayer service, a Year 5 teacher-led prayer service, a Year 6 meditation and a whole school Mass and assembly.

Information about the school

- St Mary's is an average sized primary school serving the parish of St Mary and St Thomas More in Cannock.
- The school has 61% baptised Catholics. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average.
- The percentage of children eligible for free school meals is average.
- The current headteacher has been in post since 1997 and the deputy headteacher since 2009. The well established RE co-ordinator is leaving the school to share her experience by working as a primary school RE advisor for the diocese.
- Headteacher is very aware of the need to ensure strong succession planning for school leadership and is working closely with the governors to ensure that this is well managed.

Main findings

- St Mary's reliably judges its worship, Catholic life and RE as good. This judgement is based on detailed self evaluation including formal and informal monitoring.
- The recommendation from the last inspection about deepening children's knowledge of other cultures, their religions and their places of worship has been addressed through class work, homework, trips and displays. Pupils show tolerance and respect to other religions and demonstrate a genuine curiosity to find out more.
- Parish and school work closely together and pupils speak positively about their involvement in Masses both in and out of school. Good community cohesion is evident with very strong work supporting spiritual, moral and vocational development of all members of the school community.
- A culture of bearing witness and a pride in being Catholic is evident throughout the whole school, the strong example from adults permeates through the children and a commitment to the importance of prayer is very evident across school.

School self evaluation

Catholic life and collective worship

- The monitoring and evaluation of Catholic life is good and the school's self evaluation judgements are confirmed.
- Parent questionnaire results show that parents are overwhelmingly very happy with the religious education and religious life available to them and their children.
- Parents are well informed through newsletters, parent workshops, updated school website and positive informal discussion opportunities.
- The RE leader has benefitted from excellent training provided by the diocese and as a result feels well trained and supported to lead staff CPD and work in partnership with governors.
- The parish priest supports the school well and pupils talk passionately about his sermons and how they can practise their faith in everyday life.
- Children's opinions and responses are sought and valued, with a recent faith questionnaire completed with Years 2-6 resulting in a list of recommendations which will be included in future action plans. They talk animatedly about their involvement in parish life and actively living out their faith through reading and serving at both Sunday parish and school weekday Mass.
- In line with diocesan guidelines, an understanding of virtues is being embedded with the pupils. The language of 'attentive and discerning' is being used in lessons and is displayed around school. Pupils talk confidently about their work on virtues this term and how they can use these in everyday life.
- Pupils have an understanding of vocations and enjoy contributing positively to the world around them through 'Little Way Week' and almsgiving through a variety of charitable fundraising activities throughout the year.
- Collective worship is monitored by senior staff on a regular basis, with governors and parish priest active in ensuring the quality and appropriateness.
- Following monitoring and evaluation of collective worship, and subsequent planning and implementation, the pupil's ability to pray spontaneously has improved and pupils are readily sharing their own prayers.
- Pupils are very proud of their school prayer room and can talk about how they can use it in school. A prayer audit was completed in school resulting in the development of a whole school prayer book, children taking responsibility for preparing and leading liturgy and pupil and parent responses to the use of prayer bags at home.
- The quality of prayer is high. Children deliver confident, considered prayers appropriately. The use of 'open prayer' in whole school assembly is particularly powerful with pupils confident to bear witness to their faith through spontaneous open prayer as well as planned prayer opportunities.

Governance

- Staff feel well supported by the governors of the school.
- Governors have been successful in retaining good Catholic leaders and are focused on appropriate recruitment to ensure Catholic teachers are recruited and retained.

- Staff at all levels have a performance management objective that promotes and develops the Catholic Life of school.
- Foundation governors are proud of the ethos committee and the strong work that goes into this to support and develop the Catholic life of school. Governors have a sound understanding of the importance of clear communication resulting in a positive balance between challenging and supporting school leaders.
- The headteacher and RE leader present regularly to the ethos committee, resulting in governors feeling well informed and their views being taken into consideration.
- Headteachers' reports are well presented and help governors to monitor and evaluate the Catholic life of school: they understand the strengths and development needs of the school.
- Governors recognise the work that has gone into curriculum mapping ensuring RE and Catholic life permeates all areas of the curriculum. Governors referenced the school website and the support this offers to families to support children's learning out of school.
- Governors ensure that family life and sex education is delivered in line with the teachings of the Catholic faith using the Archdiocesan scheme.

Religious Education

- Senior leaders monitor and evaluate religious education thoroughly and the inspector agrees with the school's self evaluation judgement of good.
- The RE leader conducts learning walks, book trawls, planning scrutiny, pupil interviews, and environment walks, sharing the outcomes of these with staff and governors as well as ways to continuously improve provision.
- Learning provision for RE is inline with Literacy and Numeracy within school, with differentiated outcomes shared with the children.
- The impact of RE teaching is evidenced through analysis of internal data. Last year, the large majority of Year 6 pupils achieved expected or above expected levels for RE in all units of work.
- Pupils' attainment is reliably judged through moderation within school and as part of a group of five primary schools within the local area. St Mary's is proactive at collaborative working with other schools and parishes, reinforcing to the pupils that we are all one Catholic Church working together for a common good.
- Data is analysed using resources and training provided by the diocese. As a result of analysis, new resources have been purchased to support areas for development and the RE leader has promoted and developed a range of teaching strategies to support pupils who were not accessing the RE curriculum due to literacy issues.
- A system of higher level questions to develop pupils' understanding has been introduced in the form of 'Even better if' (EBI) questions. There are examples of these being used very well across school although further embedding is required.
- Preparation for sacraments is strong with evident parish links through family Masses and artwork displayed in church. A shared sense of responsibility between school and parish is evident.
- Pupils could relate Gospel stories to everyday life and could comment beyond the literal stories and discuss meanings behind stories. Some pupils' feedback on how as Catholics we can positively impact society was very powerful and based on solid teaching of Gospel messages.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

- It is very clear that Catholic Faith is at the heart of St Mary's School and there is an ongoing commitment to continually developing Catholic ethos.
- Pupils are proud of their Catholic faith and of their school.
- The school is preparing children to be Catholics in modern Britain. Pupils speak confidently about using technology to develop their understanding of their faith through faith apps on the iPad, including using technology to examine the Bible and holy books of other faiths.
- Older pupils have a sound understanding of their faith journey and the importance of the Sacraments. All pupils enjoyed RE and felt a positive sense of ownership of their own learning.
- The quality of relationships within school is a strength with pupils treating each other and visitors with great respect.
- All teaching in religious education is at least good and there is some outstanding practice.
- Throughout the school, at least 10% of timetabling is dedicated to the teaching of RE in the classroom. The RE curriculum used is 'Learning and Growing as People of God' which follows the Archdiocesan guidelines for the provision of religious education and therefore fulfils the Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools in line with recommendations.
- Displays around school promote Catholic life. Displays in Early Years area promote Catholicity, and as a result, very young children can talk about their church and Our Lady at an age appropriate level.
- Collective worship has strong pupil involvement and children have opportunities to plan and delivery liturgy.
- St Mary's enjoys a very positive relationship with their local Catholic secondary school. Nearly all of St Mary's Year 6 pupils transfer there each year. Secondary pupils join St Mary's school to celebrate school Mass throughout the year. Strong links with the secondary chaplaincy team has supported school to develop staff members to lead the whole school in celebration and worship.

Recommendations

- Ensure that appropriate training and support are put in place for the new RE subject leader.
- Embed the expectation that pupils will respond to the higher order thinking questions (EBI's) in their books.

¹ As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform to those of the school.



November 2015

Diocesan Education Service,
Don Bosco House,
Coventry Road,
Coleshill,
B46 3EA

Dear Parents and Carers,

Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Cannock, 9th-10th November 2015

I am sharing with you the findings of the diocesan inspection of your children's school. Diocesan inspection now explores in detail the school's own view of itself as expressed in its self-evaluation. For this reason, much of the report is more technical than used to be the case. You are still entitled to have a copy of the full report should you want one and it will be available on the school website or by request from the school office.

St Mary's is a school with very good Catholic life, worship and RE and which is well led by the headteacher and his team. They carefully monitor all aspects of Catholic life and RE to ensure effective planning and continuous improvement. Progress and attainment in RE is good. St Mary's reliably judges its worship, Catholic life and RE as good. This judgement is based on detailed self evaluation including formal and informal monitoring. The recommendation from the last inspection about deepening children's knowledge of other cultures, their religions and their places of worship has been addressed through class work, homework, trips and displays. Pupils show tolerance and respect to other religions and demonstrate a genuine curiosity to find out more.

It is clear that parish and school work closely together, pupils speak positively about their involvement in Masses both in and out of school. Good community cohesion is evident with very strong work supporting spiritual, moral and vocational development of all members of the school community. A culture of bearing witness and a pride to be Catholic is evident throughout the whole school, the strong example from adults permeates through the children and a commitment to the importance of prayer is very evident across school. The prayer life within school is very strong. Children are given lots of opportunities for spiritual, moral and vocational development. The governors of school are fully supportive and understanding of the requirements of leading a Catholic school and are rightfully proud of the seeds that are being sown to support your children as Catholics in modern Britain. The pupils are very proud of their Catholic faith and of their school.

I have recommended that to improve further the school should ensure that training and support for the new RE subject leader should be put in place and that pupils should be encouraged to respond to thinking questions in their books.

I would like to thank your children for the warm welcome and exceptional manners displayed to me during my time in school.

Yours sincerely,
Julie-Anne Tallon
Diocesan Inspector