



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 137031

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Clifton

16–17 October 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

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

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

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

2

Compliance statement

- In relation to the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' conference, the school is fully compliant.
- In relation to any additional requirements of the diocesan Bishop, the school is fully compliant.
- In relation to the school's previous inspection areas for improvement, these have been fully met.

What the school does well

- St. Mary's puts its values of Love – Learn – Serve at the centre of all it does. This school is extremely welcoming, inclusive and celebrates the value and contribution of all members of the community.
- Pupils are the living embodiment of the school's mission. They demonstrate a deep sense of belonging and flourish within this joyfully and culturally diverse family community. They are engaged and passionate about all aspects of school life and particularly enjoy religious education lessons, approaching them with great interest and enthusiasm.
- All staff are valued by the school community, know the children and families well and are able to offer a high level of effective pastoral care. Positive relationships between pupils, staff and parents are treasured and based on good communication, care and mutual respect.
- Well planned opportunities for prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school and form an integral part of school life. From the earliest ages pupils engage actively and with reverence when participating in prayer and reflection.
- Strong leadership and committed governance ensure that Christ is at the heart of the school and there is a shared determination in the pursuit of this mission – informed by a programme of regular and robust monitoring.

What the school needs to improve

- To define and develop the roles and responsibilities of staff and pupil leaders of faith so that they contribute to and enhance the school mission.
- To provide ongoing CPD to develop staff confidence using resources and imaginative approaches to personalise and enhance the delivery of the new *religious education directory* (RED).
- To develop the skills and opportunities for pupils to plan and lead creative worship experiences including the four-part Celebration of the Word.

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

Pupil outcomes

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

1

Provision

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

1

Leadership

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

1

1

Pupils feel loved, valued and proud to be part of this welcoming and dynamic Catholic community. They are enthusiastic ambassadors for the school's unique identity and mission 'Love – Learn – Serve'; and can explain how it guides them in all aspects of school life. A renewed approach to integrating these values in an age appropriate and practical way has helped to raise the profile with a pupil stating 'the values were always there but now they are at the front of our minds'. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of Catholic social teaching principles, developing a strong sense of morality from the earliest ages. Positive behaviour is further motivated through the 'Values' initiative whereby role models are regularly identified and celebrated in each class. Pupils seek ways to be agents of change by supporting charities such as the local foodbank, Cafod and Lions at Large as well as carol singing and litter picking in the local community. Pupils flourish as they enthusiastically seek and embrace opportunities to grow in their faith. The relatively new Leaders of Faith group works in collaboration with the well-established chaplaincy team and seeks to enable more pupils to actively contribute towards the Catholic life of the school.

The provision for the school's mission and identity is rooted in a deep commitment to Catholic teaching and practice by leaders and governors. A staff member states, 'our Catholic beliefs and ethos are an everyday lived experience.' Staff are exemplary role models who consistently bear witness to the school's mission through their loving and supportive relationships and interactions with pupils, parents and each other. Parents, parishioners and volunteers play an active part in school life, sharing their time, talents and cultural heritage which enriches the community and fosters inclusion further. The consideration given to the school's physical environment and its commitment to quality displays and resources witnesses to its Catholic identity. The work of the chaplaincy team is enthusiastic, and the relatively new and engaging

Leader of Faith team seeks to extend chaplaincy opportunities to all pupils across the school. Leaders skilfully work to secure an inclusive Catholic curriculum whereby religious education, personal, social and health education, relationship and sex education are interlinked with Catholic social teaching and British values as a bespoke offer for personal development. A parent states the school 'is very much a family, living, working and practising God's Word.'

The flourishing of the Catholic life and mission is embraced as a core responsibility by leaders and governors who are determined role models for the entire community. The relatively new leadership team for mission, religious education standards and prayer life are energised and inspirational, offering a strong skillset promoting shared vision and expectations. Leaders are now clarifying roles to secure autonomy and most impact. Care is given to communicating the school vision and identity through the engaging newsletters and detailed website. Links with the local parish are well established and the parish priest celebrates Mass for holy days, class Masses and reconciliation services for Advent and Lent. Leaders actively participate in diocesan services offered and contribute to the bishop's vision of working collaboratively with the Little Way trust for the common good. Regular, scheduled monitoring of the Catholic life is undertaken by senior leaders and the link governor. Most recently, governors monitored the introduction of the new values and behaviour initiative and contributed positively to its further development. Monitoring activities include learning walks, pupil interviews and feedback from parents. Leaders and governors are fully committed to the wellbeing of the staff team. Training opportunities are varied, personalised and much valued by staff.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

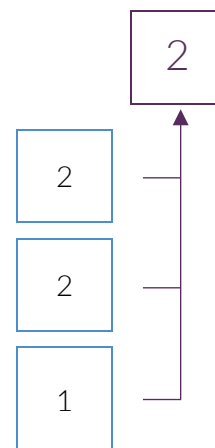
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Pupils of all ages enjoy learning in religious education and approach their lessons with great interest and enthusiasm. They particularly enjoy exploring scripture and empathising with characters through drama, art and other investigating activities. As a consequence, behaviour in lessons is excellent because pupils are fully engaged. From the earliest ages, pupils' knowledge and recall of scripture is strong and they can make links to prior learning. Through 'I wonder' and 'big questions' they express opinions articulately and reflect on those of others thoughtfully. One pupil states 'there are no right or wrong answers, we think deeply and express our feelings'. Pupils can link scripture to their moral commitment in everyday life, for example linking virtues of faith, hope and love to the story of Abraham and the lives of role models like Don Bosco and Martin Luther King. Parents praise this approach which 'drives my child to question and develop a personal relationship with God'. Pupils produce work of a good standard and the best examples in floor books capture the creative enrichment of pupils' learning. Pupils can explain teachers' marking procedures and feel challenged with the 'next step' question. They believe quick quizzes could help them recognise progress at the end of a unit.

Teachers demonstrate a deep commitment to the value of religious education and expect pupils of all abilities to do their best. Quality teaching is exemplified through careful preparation and confidence in the subject knowledge of the new curriculum. Teachers review planning and resources carefully, adapting them as appropriate for their classes. In some cases, teachers plan collaboratively with other schools within the partnership. They make skilful use of questioning to identify pupils' starting points and inform next steps. Planning of work sequences is carefully devised to deliver opportunities for pupils to undertake a variety of engaging learning activities including drama, discussion and artwork. A series of progressively challenging 'big questions' such as 'Why should we praise God?' demonstrate that teachers have a clear understanding of the impact of learning on the moral and spiritual development

of pupils and their ability to meaningfully make sense of their experience of the world. When exploring stewardship, Year 1 pupils expressed concern for pollution in the oceans when asked 'how can we look after our world?' Feedback is woven into lessons through further questioning and dialogue. Celebration of pupils' work and effort is prioritised, leading to high levels of pupil motivation.

Leaders and governors maintain religious education at the heart of the curriculum. They ensure that the taught curriculum meets the requirements of the *religious education directory* and holds parity in expectations with other core subjects. Together, the distributive leadership team share a high level of expertise and clear vision for teaching and learning in religious education which is communicated well with the staff team. Ongoing professional development remains a priority and diocesan training has been accessed, in addition to in-house bespoke training and support. Leaders' commitment to their own professional development is excellent, reflected in four colleagues extending their studies in religious education and Catholic leadership. Enrichment opportunities connect learning with broader experiences, the parish and wider community. The parish priest engages in religious education lessons on vocation, Year 6 pupils attend an annual retreat at Prinknash Abbey and external speakers deliver gospel focused assemblies or cultural sessions on faith traditions or charities. Leaders and governors recognise the value of monitoring and evaluation, with robust systems in place informing accurate school evaluation and future improvement plans. The skills of members of the team are recognised beyond the school and excellent practice is shared willingly with partner schools.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

2

2

Pupils enjoy opportunities for prayer and liturgy and from the earliest ages are fully engaged, respectful and reverent. They appreciate the opportunity to be still and reflective as well as feel part of a community of prayer. They are a school who love to sing with joy and some pupils express how much they value the chance to be silent. Appropriate to age, pupils can talk about how prayer reflects the rhythm of the liturgical year. Whole school prayer 'Experiences' such as Creation and Harvest, Advent, Easter and Pentecost as well as the Rosary enable pupils to pray in different ways. Pupil chaplains support in the preparation and delivery of these sessions and are keen to be more involved in the planning stages. Pupil led Celebration of the Word is regular and pupils are familiar with following the diocesan four-part plan. Younger pupils can consciously participate in meditation and use prayerful actions and gestures, whilst Year 3 have been introduced to the tradition of Lectio Divina. Additional opportunities to include more creative and spontaneous prayer and mission activities will further enhance the experience and ensure consistency. Pupils have regular opportunities to celebrate Mass in the church or school and enjoy doing so.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school and are celebrated through the newsletter and website. School events are punctuated with rich prayer opportunities such as the recent blessing of the new trim trail. There is an effective weekly schedule of worship which includes a focus on the Sunday Gospel or liturgical season, school values or Catholic social teaching, class worship and a celebration assembly. Quality worship resources are available and music, visuals images, artefacts and silence are used carefully to create the appropriate mood and setting in smaller or whole school gatherings. One parent remarks about October Rosary sessions, 'Both my children want to say the rosary at home, inspired by what they have been learning at school'. Whole school 'Experience' retreats as well as the Little Way week nurtures pupils' sense of awe and wonder and instils a feeling of belonging to a

community of prayer. Leaders are inspiring role models, and all staff are committed in their contribution to prayer life. The school is fully committed to including parents and parishioners in the prayer life of the school with a parent stating, 'It's so lovely that parents are invited to attend school Masses and other religious events'.

Leaders and governors understand the importance of the centrality of prayer in the school, using the diocesan model and aligning with the Little Way Trust in their policy for prayer and liturgy. Prayer has a high profile in the school physical environment, in newsletters and on the very informative website. Senior leaders have a secure understanding and have devised an annual plan of provision for the liturgical year, seasons, holy days and feasts. Together with the support of the parish priest and diocese, they ensure that collective worship and liturgy are relevant and have a clear purpose appropriate to the needs of all participants. Leaders are clear on the professional development needs of the staff team in order to nurture confidence and the creativity and breadth of prayer experiences available. A priority to further develop collective worship is part of staff appraisal targets in order to build on their contribution and enable St. Mary's prayer community to flourish further. Leaders including governors use monitoring to good effect informing plans to meet the requirements of the new Prayer and Liturgy directory expectations and are enthused with a vision for a range of creative opportunities to roll out to the school community and parish.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	137031
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9163358
Full postal address of the school	Cheltenham Road East, Churchdown, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL3 1HU
School phone number	01452714053
Headteacher	Liam Jordan
Chair of trustees	Richard Wallace
School Website	www.st-marys-churchdown.gloucs.sch.uk/
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Mary'S Catholic Primary School, Churchdown
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	28-29 th November 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Rita E. McLoughlin
Tracey Sessions

Lead
Team

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