



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, Lea Town

URN: 119634

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Paul Swarbrick, Bishop of Lancaster on:

Date: 2nd November 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	1
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.....	1
Collective worship (p.7) The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....	1
The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- Relationships are excellent and are built on respect for the dignity of each individual.
- There are excellent links with the parish which result in a holistic approach to supporting all pupils and their families, especially the most vulnerable.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding.
- Pupils in all three key stages are religiously literate and achieve well in religious education lessons.
- Leaders, including governors, are relentless in their efforts to improve outcomes for all pupils.

What the school needs to improve:

- Seek opportunities for the religious education subject leader to work with other diocesan subject leaders to share good practice, in order to continue to support the teaching of religious education and secure outstanding teaching across the whole school.
- Provide further professional development and formation for staff which leads them to a greater understanding of the liturgical norms of the Church.

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

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

1

Provision

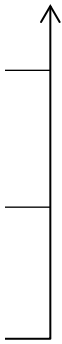
The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

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

1



St Mary's is an outstanding Catholic school. Self-evaluation of the Catholic life of the school is rigorous and is an accurate reflection of this.

Following a review, which included a 'Vision and Mission' evening for staff, families and governors, the school's mission statement is known and understood by stakeholders. Pupils know what it means to be a member of the St Mary's family. The school prayer, which is known and prayed by all in school is closely linked to the mission statement.

Behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. Pupils show a deep respect for the dignity of others because staff are excellent role models; everyone in school is treated with love and respect. As a result, relationships are excellent.

Pupils' leadership is excellent, and they have a true understanding of their personal responsibility to care for our common home and pursue the common good. For example, they are confident in taking a leading role in suggesting and organising charitable events. They are able to articulate the theology which underpins their actions. During inspection, pupils referred confidently to Matthew 25:40 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me', when discussing their response to global issues.

The school has an engaging Catholic environment. Each class has a beautiful prayer space which is well-resourced, carefully maintained and reflects the liturgical year. A key piece of scripture is also displayed in the prayer spaces. Pupils know their key scripture and can reflect on its meaning for them, both in and beyond school. There are beautiful displays in every corridor and communal spaces which reflect the community's devotion to Our Lady.

The school's commitment to pastoral care is outstanding. The headteacher works with governors and parish members to provide support for the most vulnerable children and their families. For example, the *Helping Hands* initiative provides 'grab bags' containing essential items, which are always available from the main entrance. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the way the school supports and nurtures their children. One parent reflected the views of many, 'We are grateful for the impact the school has on our daughter and can see the joy she gets from learning more about her Catholic faith.'

The provision for relationships, health and sex education is carefully planned and meets all statutory and diocesan requirements. Leaders, including governors, liaise with parents to ensure they, as the first educators of the children, are fully aware of the content of the curriculum.

There have been changes to the leadership team in recent years. The head teacher, supported by the governing body, is successfully developing the leadership skills of a new religious education subject leader, who also has a senior role in all aspects of school life. Together, they are true witnesses to their faith, working hard to serve others, to ensure that Christ is truly at the heart of everything done in school.

The head teacher works with the parish priest, the deacon, who is the Chair of Governors and other governors, to provide excellent chaplaincy provision and ensure opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of staff and pupils. The clergy are regular visitors to school and the head teacher leads the sacramental preparation in the parish. The school also welcomes regular visits from an order of nuns who live in the parish.

Governors are effective and ambitious for the Catholic life of the school. They have considerable expertise and knowledge of Catholic education which helps them support and challenge the school. There is a commitment to the physical and mental wellbeing of all members of staff. For example, a trained counsellor is employed to support the wellbeing of staff, pupils and their families.

Governors and leaders ensure that professional development, focusing on the Catholic life and mission of the school, is well planned and effective. This includes induction for staff new to the school. Three members of staff are undertaking the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

1

Provision

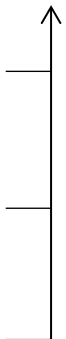
The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

1

Leadership

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

2



Pupils are developing excellent knowledge, understanding and skills in religious education. Work in their books is of the same high standard as that seen in other subjects and shows coverage of the learning required by the *Religious Education Directory*. It is well presented and shows a range of creative approaches and consistent progression across all year groups.

Pupils state that they enjoy their religious education lessons, and this is evidenced in their excellent behaviour; pupils are fully engaged and enthusiastic learners. Pupils told inspectors, 'We learn from scripture in every RE lesson.' Pupils are religiously literate, and outcomes are very good in religious education.

A baseline assessment is completed as pupils enter school. Pupils make rapid progress in Early Years Foundation Stage so that, by Year 1 they are working broadly at age-related expectations. They continue to make very good progress across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The standard of work produced and the outcomes for pupils are at least in line with those in other core subjects.

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education, as evidenced in pupils' books, discussions with pupils and the teaching observed during inspection, is high. Most teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Staff have high expectations and are enthusiastic about inspiring and motivating pupils within religious education lessons. The bronze, silver and gold challenges in lessons enthuse and inspire pupils to push themselves and extend their own learning. Lessons begin with a recap of previous learning and the learning objective and new vocabulary for the lesson are shared and explained. Older pupils can relate previous learning to new and more challenging tasks.

Teachers use questioning skilfully to extend learning and deepen understanding. They are confident in probing further to develop pupils' ideas and responses and adapt explanations and tasks to maximise learning for all pupils.

Lessons are carefully planned, and thought is given to the resources used, including images, music and relevant vocabulary, tailoring learning to meet the needs of all children. Those with additional needs are well supported by staff, are fully included in all activities to achieve well. One parent told inspectors, 'My children are not Catholic, but they know so much about the faith. They enjoy talking about everything they have learned, at home.'

Celebration of effort is evident across the school. Children are encouraged to 'shine' and are praised for their efforts. Teachers give pupils time for purposeful reflection in lessons. For example, during a lesson observed during inspection, pupils reflected on the injustice of some scenarios posed by the teacher. They suggested ways in which they could help and support those affected, using scripture to support their ideas. Marking and feedback in religious education pupil books is in line with other core subjects.

The religious education subject leader is relatively new to the role. He has begun to support teachers in their teaching of religious education and is taking a lead in tracking pupil progress. Working closely with the head teacher, he has begun to check performance and to ensure good outcomes. Staff say they feel well supported by senior leaders. The further development of this aspect of school leadership, including working with other subject leaders from the diocese to share good practice and continuing to support the teaching of religious education across school, will secure outstanding teaching across the whole school.

The curriculum for religious education is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Directory*. A scheme of work is used as the core, which is essential for teachers new to the school and those with no prior knowledge of the Catholic faith. Visits to places of worship and regular relevant visitors to school enhance the provision.

Leaders and governors understand the strengths of the school and what needs to improve. There is a clear plan for the implementation of the *Religious Education Directory*, in line with Diocesan recommendations, so that all year groups will have implemented the new curriculum by September 2025.

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

2

Leadership

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

1



Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school. Pupils and staff respond with enthusiasm to being part of a prayerful community. Across the whole school, pupils respond with reverence and respect during times of prayer. They gather quietly and stand to welcome the gospel. They are able to reflect during periods of sacred silence.

Pupils know, understand and use many traditional prayers and there is a structure of prayer throughout the school day, including the school prayer. Appropriate to their age and capacity, pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of the shape and meaning of the Church's liturgical year and how it is expressed in the prayer life of the school.

Pupil leadership of prayer and liturgy progresses through the year groups so that by upper Key Stage 2 they can undertake liturgical ministries, independently and confidently. Younger pupils are well supported by staff to make an age-appropriate contribution to class prayer. There is a consistent planning format across the whole school which is used by staff and pupils. Most liturgies follow the cycle of the liturgical year, but there are also opportunities to reflect on work covered in religious education lessons and contemporary issues. For example, during inspection, older pupils led younger pupils in prayer linked to God's creation.

As part of the celebrations of the school's patronal feast, there is a Marian week each year. Pupils lead liturgies, to which their families are invited. This experience is enhanced by a pilgrimage to Ladyewell for some of the pupils.

Scripture is central to all prayer experiences. Well-chosen passages, informed by the liturgical season, form the heart of prayer and liturgy. All classes have prayer spaces with appropriate

religious artefacts and scripture. There are many beautiful displays around the school which also enhance the prayer life of the school. In addition, there are outdoor prayer spaces which are used regularly by the pupils. This enables an inclusive approach to prayer, for example some children pray the rosary using conkers. Singing is included in the weekly plan for prayer and liturgy, however there was little evidence of the impact of this during inspection, although instrumental music was used to begin and finish celebrations of the Word.

Staff support pupils when leading prayer and liturgy. They are developing a good understanding of the liturgical year with its seasons and feasts. They share this knowledge with pupils to help them lead prayer and liturgy. By gaining a more thorough and comprehensive understanding of the liturgical norms of the Church, they will enable pupils to reflect these norms in their preparation.

The school offers many opportunities for parents and carers to attend liturgies and Masses, both in school and in the church. Holy days of obligation, and other significant days are prioritised so that pupils, their families and parishioners can celebrate the Eucharist. Parents value the early morning Masses during Lent, which enable them to join their child and the school before going to work.

Many of the governors regularly attend the Masses and liturgies. They then feed back to the rest of the governing body, both formally and informally, so that all are well informed of the experiences pupils receive. They are committed to ensuring high quality professional development and formation opportunities for all staff.

Professional development, focusing on the prayer life of the school is well-planned and effective. For example, recent support from a diocesan advisor on prayer and pupil leadership of prayer has resulted in common practice across the whole school. The introduction of the *Golden Go Forth* by leaders has focused staff and pupils on putting their faith into action.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St. Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	119634
Full postal address of the school	Darkinson Lane, Lea Town, Preston, PR4 0RJ
School phone number	01772 729881
Name of head teacher or principal	Mrs Arran Brogden
Chair of governing board	Deacon John Cliffe
School Website	https://www.lea-st-marys.lancs.sch.uk/
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	4 to 11
Trustees	Lancaster Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees Registered
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	July 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	1 - outstanding

The inspection team

Jacqueline Hampson	Lead inspector
Jane Barnes	Team inspector

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