

St Mary's Catholic Catholic Voluntary Academy

URN: 146140

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham

15–16 January 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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

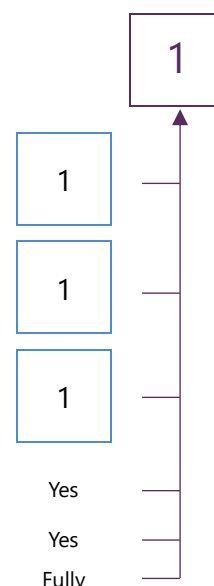
Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



Compliance statement

- The school's religious education programme ensures that 10% or more of the timetable is dedicated to teaching and learning in the subject.
- The school follows the guidance of the diocesan bishop in its choice of religious education resource for teaching.
- School leaders have worked hard and effectively to have impact on those areas identified for improvement at the last inspection, including governors' involvement in evaluation processes, links with parishes, and raising standards in religious education.

What the school does well

- The SPIRIT of St Mary's is at the heart of its Catholic life and mission, and is embraced by all members of the school community.
- The executive headteacher has driven her vision for St Mary's to outstanding outcomes, with unrelenting focus, through a difficult period in the school's history: she has been fully supported by the commitment of the leadership team, staff and governors.
- Teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills have enabled pupils to work independently and with full engagement in religious education lessons.
- Effective questioning has been a driver of the high standard of pupils' religious literacy and oracy: these are a strength of the school.
- There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to experience carefully planned celebrations across the Church's liturgical year: these are central to the life of the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Produce a comprehensive policy for Prayer and Liturgy that fulfils the requirements of the Prayer and Liturgy Directory, and which is accessible and useful to relevant staff as a point of reference when preparing acts of collective worship.

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

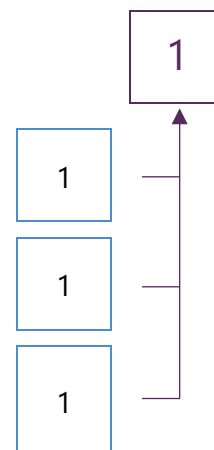
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

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

Leadership

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



Pupils enjoy coming to St Mary's school, and appreciate all that it has to offer. They are happy, confident and secure, relishing their environment close to nature, fully embracing the Catholic identity and mission of the school. The school's mission statement is well understood and the mission prayer is recited daily, known by heart. The acronym SPIRIT focuses the pupils on what is expected of them and they enjoy meeting these expectations. They actively participate in the Catholic life of the school: they display understanding of their sense of worth, valued as made in the image and likeness of God. Pupils have an easy acceptance of each other: 'We stand up for each other, we help each other'. Relationships between them are very good and behaviour is excellent. They are taking leading roles in responding to the demands of Catholic social teaching, and can explain the meaning of each of its principles, even at a young age, and how these 'CSTs', as they call them, should influence their daily actions. They willingly take on leading roles within the school to put these principles into practice: 'When Jesus fed the 5000, we feed the poor', was one pupil's example. Pupils highly value the school's chaplaincy provision, and the volunteer pupil chaplaincy team makes a significant impact in its work of planning and presenting celebrations, setting up prayer stations, and fundraising for charity, for example. Other pupils taking on responsibilities include the Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) apostles, language ambassadors, and parish ambassadors, who share weekly tips to 'live simply' with parishioners each week.

The school mission statement, the mission prayer and the SPIRIT expectations have a significant impact within the school community: they are deeply rooted in the Word of God, and give clear expression to how the school must live out its daily activities. Staff commitment to the mission is absolute, and their enthusiasm and commitment to the Catholic mission is plain to see. This

emanates from a community rejoicing in the re-birth of the school after a very difficult period following the fire that destroyed its previous building and the subsequent Covid pandemic: 'a supportive compassionate and morally grounded community' as one parent commented. Inclusivity is highly valued, in the midst of a significant influx of pupils from different cultural backgrounds. A culture of welcome has been firmly established, embracing whoever comes to the school. The excellent behaviour of pupils is a result of the impact of the consistent modelling of staff members, significantly influencing relationships across the school. The pastoral care of pupils shows a concerted commitment to serve the most vulnerable, and this is outstanding. The physical environment of the school explicitly witnesses to its Catholic identity, with all the community relishing the sense of space and the closeness to nature that it offers. Chaplaincy provision is central, helping each person to reflect on themselves and strongly influencing the spiritual and moral development of all.

Catholic life and mission is embraced by all leaders and governors as a core responsibility. Engagement with the diocese, the St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, the parish and parents is flourishing in all contexts. Parents appreciate the school's Catholic ethos and how well it develops their **children**. There is a strong commitment by leaders and governors to putting Catholic social teaching into action in pursuit of the common good, care for the vulnerable, and use of resources. Staff are grateful for the attention given to their wellbeing. The whole of the taught curriculum has Catholic influence threaded through it. Governors are impressive in their vision and ambition for the school.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

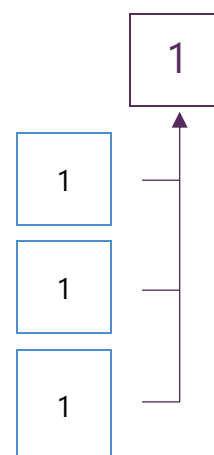
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 demonstrate excellent knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the content of learning expectations within the religious education curriculum designed by the school. Indeed, pupils are very religiously literate, and can articulate their understanding through the use of specialised vocabulary associated with the topics studied. For example, younger pupils can explain clearly concepts such as 'solidarity' and 'ordinary time', and the oldest pupils can discuss with each other at a level more associated with adults, debating matters skilfully and respectfully. Consequently, pupils make consistently good progress in knowing and remembering more, able to recall previous learning confidently. They work with independence and sustained concentration, collaborating easily and productively with each other. They produce high quality work, that is well presented. They show an innate curiosity in their studies, and are actively engaged in their work. It is clear that pupils really enjoy their religious education lessons, and their behaviour is outstanding during each session.

Teachers' subject knowledge is very good, and their confidence in teaching the religious education curriculum is evident. Teachers have high expectations of pupils: lessons move at pace, after clear explanation of what is to be learned, and how this can be achieved through a variety of tasks. The quality of questioning by teachers is a real strength: pupils are constantly challenged to produce precise answers, or to explain answers more fully, and to recall previous learning, in order to see how present learning links to what has been learnt before. This very effective strategy consolidates and extends pupils' knowledge in a consistent manner, so that understanding becomes embedded. Adaptation of learning tasks for specific individuals or groups of pupils is also a strength: this is achieved through careful but unobtrusive scaffolding and the discrete support and encouragement of teaching assistants. This enables pupils to have confidence in accessing learning. Praise is used frequently and appropriately to reward and

encourage, coupled with the highlighting of good work, and the ongoing feedback from teachers in pupils' workbooks. Pupils are given opportunities to express themselves in a wide variety of contexts. Priority is also given to ensure that there is time for purposeful reflection in lessons. The school's drive to introduce an understanding of Catholic social teaching principles has been particularly effective, impacting on pupils' moral and spiritual development significantly.

Leaders and governors have ensured that what is taught in religious education is a faithful expression of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (2012). The school has continued to use the published scheme of work – Come and See – but leaders have amended it skilfully to ensure that key learning content is addressed, the development of the understanding of religious vocabulary is a focus, and that ethical and spiritual questions are considered. Thus, the curriculum design is personal to the school and has focussed teaching very effectively: it is imaginatively and thoughtfully planned. It is enriched by special events, such as the termly 'mission days', opportunities within the wider community and the emphasis on Catholic social teaching. Leaders ensure that it meets the needs of different groups of pupils, conscious of the diversity that exists. Religious education has at least full parity with other core curriculum subjects in terms of timetabling, provision of resources, staffing and professional development. Staff members have been able to access regular professional development from within the school's own staff, and through opportunities presented by the St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi-Academy Trust and the Diocesan Education Service. Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation of religious education is informed by regular monitoring and analysis, and suitable challenge is used by governors to ensure accountability for high standards.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

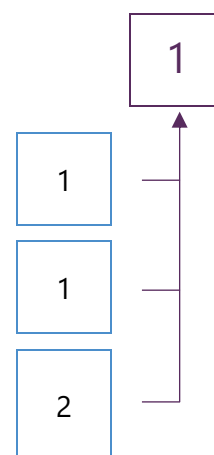
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

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



Pupils' engagement and participation in experiences of prayer and liturgy is evident in their attentiveness, and their willingness to be actively involved through reading, answering questions, or making thoughtful remarks. The enthusiasm and enjoyment in communal singing is particularly marked, as is the quality of prayerful silence. Pupils' knowledge of the liturgical year, and how it influences the prayer life of the school, is very well developed. They understand the wide variety of ways of praying that are part of Catholic tradition, according to the prevailing season. Pupils work effectively in collaborating with each other to plan, prepare and lead acts of worship, often carrying out the preparation in their own time. Their capacity for evaluating the quality of the prayer and liturgy they have planned is developing strongly. They can make links between what they've learned in the curriculum and how these fit into prayer and liturgy celebrations. Pupils enjoy the voluntary opportunities offered by the prayer group and Bible story club. From a commitment to these activities, the chaplaincy team emerges: this group of pupils is active throughout the school, and has a significant impact.

Experiences of prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school: they are weaved throughout its daily and weekly life. Pupils pray several times a day, and there is a weekly schedule of different types of celebrations, always rooted in scripture. Staff gatherings are also marked by prayer. Scripture is intrinsic to celebrations: the choice of scripture passages is very well considered, reflecting the liturgical season and other areas of focus from the religious education curriculum. There is a wide range of engaging and creative experiences for pupils. These include celebrations of the word in class or in age phase; hymn singing that includes a focus on worship; reflections on the Sunday gospel; and Christian meditation exercises each day. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, regular celebration of the Eucharist, and the pilgrimage to Walsingham are among further features spread through the year. The chapel,

at the centre of the school site, is a celebrated and well-used space, and there are well presented and maintained prayer focus areas in each classroom and block. Staff members are exemplary models of participation in prayer and liturgy. There is an open invitation to families to engage and be involved: 'As parents we are encouraged to join in the prayer life of the school during celebrations of the word, rosary recitation and mission days.' A strong link has been fostered with the local parish, particularly through the hard work and dedication of the lay chaplain.

The school's collective worship policy is under review in order to update its guidance to staff, and to ensure it is then used actively as a reference point. The development of the introduction of formal prayers has been established in the school prayer book, and consideration is being given to formalising the progression of skills and expectations of pupils in pupil-led celebrations of the word. The school has prioritised building up these skills of participation across all age groups. Pupil-led celebrations are frequent, and leaders and the lay chaplain assist staff and pupils well to plan and lead experiences of prayer and liturgy. The school is particularly well-resourced to support a well-planned school calendar that includes all elements of the range of prayer and liturgy to be celebrated across the liturgical year. Time, staffing and facilities have all been given prominence in organising provision. The highest priority is placed on ensuring there is regular professional development of staff, including opportunities for personal formation. Self-evaluation is good, with leaders and governors actively involved and with pupils' self-evaluation rapidly developing.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	146140
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8313528
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy, Broadway, Derby, DE22 1AU
School phone number	01332 554831
Headteacher	Amanda Greaves
Chair of local governing body	Emma Farmer
School Website	https://www.stmarysderby.srscmat.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	5 March 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1 - Outstanding

The inspection team

Alan Dewhurst
Lucy Gunton

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