



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection Report

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC ACADEMY

Part of the Newman Catholic Collegiate Multi Academy Company
Ford Green Road, Norton-le-Moors, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 8EZ

Inspection dates:

4th & 5th July 2018

Lead Inspector:

Mr T J Hughes

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS:

Good

Catholic Life:

Outstanding

Religious Education:

Good

Collective Worship:

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection:

Outstanding

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

This is a Good Catholic school because:

- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. At St Mary's Catholic Academy there is a desire to grow together in life and in faith.
- Religious Education at St Mary's is good. Pupils are reflective and energetic in all of their activities. Teaching and learning in Religious Education is well planned and effective.
- All members of the school community engage in Collective Worship with grace and joy. The outstanding Collective Worship reflects the spiritual journey that the pupils share with the staff, governors, parents and parishioners.

It is not yet Outstanding because:

- Some approaches to tasks in Religious Education limit progress and do not enable groups of pupils to maximise their learning.
- The monitoring of Religious Education is not sufficiently rigorous.
- Feedback in Religious Education is not consistently applied across all age groups.

FULL REPORT

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Undertake rigorous monitoring in Religious Education, which identifies where pupils are not making sufficient progress.

- Improve the delivery of Religious Education to secure a majority of outstanding teaching and learning.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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| The quality of the Catholic Life of the school. | Outstanding |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school. | Outstanding |
| The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school. | Outstanding |
| How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school. | Outstanding |

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

- Catholic Life at St Mary's Catholic Academy is outstanding.
- The pupils have a deep understanding of the school mission –
Many Hearts, One Accord
They are able to articulate that they are the many hearts of Jesus that follow his one accord. This is seen in their actions both in and outside of school.
- The pupils actively seek opportunities to lead and promote the Catholic Life of the school in many ways, including preparing Collective Worship, designing charitable giving activities and seeking ways to support those who are less fortunate.
- Pupils contribute to the development of the Catholic Life of the school, as a result of their views being comprehensively shared in 'pupil voice' discussions and as part of the annual pupil questionnaire.
- The Religious Education action plan, which sets out the spiritual direction of the school, is influenced by the thoughts and ideas of the pupils. For example, the contributions of the pupils has led to the purchase of new bibles and candles for classrooms and an increased engagement with local and global charities.
- Support for local foodbanks has been just one of the initiatives driven by the inspired 'Mini-Vinnies' group, who act on behalf of the pupils to enhance the Catholic Life of the school.
- Pupils value the quality of 'loyalty' that they sense in one another and the responsibility they feel for the well-being of others. They see this as a priority and are determined that their Catholic school community is mindful of the needs of all.
- The behaviour of pupils at St Mary's is exemplary. All of their actions and interactions are influenced by the essential strand of 'Respect' running through the school's behaviour policy, 'Respect for others, respect for other's property and respect for God'.
- As a result of their excellent conduct, the atmosphere for learning and the easy collaboration of pupils gives rise to mature spiritual growth and good progress in Religious Education.
- Pupils benefit spiritually from their annual retreats to Alton Castle. The Year 5 group experience a three day visit, where they explore their relationships with God and each other. They participate in reflective and collaborative activities, which allow them the time and space to consider deeply the impact their faith has on their lives.
- The Year 3 and Year 6 pupils undertake retreats as part of their preparation for the sacraments. These pupils return from their retreats able to articulate the impact of the sacraments in their lives. For example, the Year 6 pupils feel the presence of the Holy Spirit guides them on 'the right path' and makes them stronger as Catholics.

- The school has focussed on vocations as part of the current school development plan. The 'Vocations Week' in 2017 immersed the pupils in the language of vocations. Pupils have a well-shaped view of this part of their faith development. They talk of how their future career choices are influenced by God calling them. They recognise that 'Jesus has a plan for them'.
- The pupils acknowledge their responsibility to set an example to others by staying true to their faith, going to church and showing dedication in their lives. They say that, 'Jesus wants us to be saints.'
- Pupils are key to the quality of the pastoral care in the school. Many pupils take on roles which contribute to the Catholic Life of the school. For example, Year 6 pupils operate as reading buddies for younger pupils, offering support, guidance and friendship. A range of other pupil roles include house captains, dinner hall monitors, altar servers and school worship team membership. These roles are taken seriously by pupils, who are proud to undertake their Christian service to the school community.
- As a result of well-planned programmes, pupils have an evolving understanding of loving and sexual development appropriate to their age. The schemes that have been used to deliver this work are being reviewed to explore the use of more contemporary materials, which will support the young people further as they grow.
- Pupils highly value and contribute to the chaplaincy provision of the school and the parish. As they grow, many pupils are eager to become altar servers and take a role in the life of the parish. The relationships between the pupils and the parish priest demonstrate the high value placed on the chaplaincy provision by everyone. Pupils are confident that they can seek spiritual guidance from the parish priest and receive sound advice whenever they need to confide in him.
- Faith is alive in every corner of the school. From the youngest children in nursery to the oldest in Year 6, the pupils are nurtured in an environment that is alive with spirituality and stories of commitment. There is the tangible recognition that the pupils' ideas are valid and that they are the witnesses of Christ in the world.
- The aspirations of the school are driven by the mission statement. All pupils are committed to the goal of sharing respect by collaborating happily to maintain a community that is diverse but unified in Christ. The pupils often speak of people in their school family who are 'all different, all one'.
- The school staff are very effective in promoting the school's mission statement and bringing it alive for the pupils. As a result, the learning and pastoral experiences are spiritually rich and supportive, helping the pupils, whatever their needs, to thrive and realise success in all aspects of life.
- In order to maintain the enriched nature of the ethos, the school leaders and staff have been reflective in their planning. New policies, staff training, as well as the design of each subsequent development plan, have the desire to enliven Christian values as their central point of reference. An example of this is the provision of high-quality Catholic Life training for new staff and the energy that the leaders have demonstrated in enhancing the skills of middle leaders, as they grow to have a greater influence on the mission of the school.
- School staff are confident in their vocation, which has led to a greater range of global engagement activities, specific support for pupils with emotional and social needs and a lively and thought-provoking curriculum.
- The parish priest embraces his many roles in ministering the Eucharist, interpreting the work of the wider Church for the children and providing security, understanding and advice for all members of the school family. Pupils, parents, staff and parishioners flourish as a Christian community, as a result of his guidance.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision of the Catholic Life of the school.

- The combined vision of the executive principal, head of school and the more recently appointed Religious Education subject leader maintains a school experience that embeds faith and spiritual development for all of the pupils.
- Communication and consultation amongst the school leaders has been a significant strength and has shaped a well-structured and spiritually rich school environment. The executive principal and Religious Education team liaise closely with the clergy, the wider parish and the Diocese to ensure that the Catholic Life of the school is sustained and improved.
- The governors are regularly informed about the Catholic Life of the school. They accept invitations to attend school events and witness the range of Religious Education learning, Collective Worship and initiatives, which illustrate the ethos of the school.
- The link governor for Religious Education makes an important contribution to the strategic direction of the Catholicity of the school. The school benefits from her expertise in terms of advice and challenge.
- The governors' perceptions of Catholic Life are strengthened by their roles within the Newman Catholic Collegiate. Within this Multi Academy Company (MAC) school leaders can share policies, debate plans for enhancement and analyse the results of monitoring.
- The Newman Catholic Collegiate has a strong desire to promote the journey of faith to all parents within the MAC.
- Through regular letters, the website and face to face discussions, parents are kept well informed of all of the elements of the Catholic Life of the school. Parents and carers embrace the school's mission and in turn support their children as they grow religiously. The meaningful programmes for sacramental preparation ensure that all involved are mindful of the journey of faith that the pupils travel.
- The Religious Education leader regularly undertakes training and consultation with the Diocese, in order to update her colleagues of ideas, initiatives and wider issues of faith. Her training will often act as a catalyst to start new conversations. For example, the school is now updating its resources to support the young people with their understanding of relationships and sex education.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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| The quality of Religious Education. | Good |
| How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education. | Good |
| The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education. | Good |
| How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education. | Good |

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

- The provision and outcomes of Religious Education at St Mary's Catholic Academy are securely good.
- Significant improvement in the pupils' knowledge and skills in Religious Education is acknowledged when comparing the baseline assessment on entry into nursery and assessments undertaken at the end of Reception class. Pupils at St Mary's get off to a very good start in their Religious Education learning.

- This trend of good progress continues throughout the pupils' primary school career.
- Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities have made good progress as a result of sound interventions supporting their Religious Education work.
- In some year groups, where the school has assessed that boys and girls are performing differently, the classroom staff have made useful adjustments to lessons in order to maximise the learning for all.
- Year on year all pupils grow in knowledge of the Faith and improve their skills.
- School leaders have presided over effective improvements in teachers' planning for Religious Education. High quality planning engages all pupils and combined with informative assessments, teachers have been able to promote deep thinking and responses in their pupils.
- Pupils' current work is never less than good. In some year groups the quality of pupils' work is outstanding.
- The pupils enjoy Religious Education. They take particular pleasure in stories from the Gospels and can articulate which are their favourite stories of Jesus and what message they take from them.
- Pupils are able to discuss the content of both the Old and the New Testaments, explaining their meaning at a very high level.
- Pupils relish the rich Religious Education curriculum and enjoy exploring the themes and the key events of the liturgical year, the lives of saints and the structures of the Church.
- The opportunities to learn about other faiths are important to the pupils. They are eager to understand the essential elements of all world faiths and in turn acknowledge the need for respect and tolerance.
- In lessons pupils demonstrate sound religious thinking. They respond maturely, drawing on their prior knowledge and displaying good religious literacy. As a result, they can make links between the events in the Gospels and their own lives.
- Pupils appreciate the range of activities, which bring the Religious Education curriculum alive. Drama, art and creative activities are some of the ways they become immersed in spiritual learning.
- Pupils' behaviour in Religious Education lessons is excellent, allowing a positive and productive time where pupils can grow in knowledge, skill and spiritual reflection.
- The teaching of Religious Education is never less than good. Some teaching is outstanding.
- The good quality teaching is brought about through teachers' thoughtful questioning, the ability of teachers to consolidate pupils' prior learning, the well-established routines for learning and the many inspired ideas that teachers use to engage the pupils.
- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and work at an appropriate pace to challenge and engage the learners.
- The best teaching occurs where teachers take time and care to promote meaningful discussions about faith and ensure that the dialogue is appropriate for pupils with differing needs.
- Subject knowledge in Religious Education is very strong across the staff team; this supports lively discussions in class.
- Teachers are skilled in the way that they use their resources. Religious Education lessons are enlivened by vivid pictures, appropriate and accessible text and a range of artefacts, which inspire the pupils' thinking and responses.
- The pupils' work and development of skills are supported by an evolving approach to teachers' dialogue with their pupils and marking. In most year groups, teachers guide pupils to manage their Religious Education books with great care and attention to detail. As a result, these pupils' books are special. They are neat, well presented and provide evidence of rich teaching and learning.

- However, this is not the case in all year groups and whilst the quality of feedback is generally good, there is work to do to consolidate the full dialogue between the teachers and pupils. This will help pupils reflect on their faith at a deeper level.
- Teachers make sure that pupils can access learning and progress in lessons by providing tasks that are differentiated to their needs and by using appropriate and vivid resources to engage the pupils. However, the structure of some tasks, for particular ability groups, do not allow pupils to fully explore the deeper responses in faith that may be present in their thinking.
- Pupils' well-developed English skills, evident in writing across the curriculum, are not always fully utilised in Religious Education. At times, the format used by pupils to record their ideas limits their ability to expand their spiritual thinking and reflection.
- Team work in the classrooms is strong, with teachers and teaching assistants working well together to support the pupils' development. For example, where understanding is to be advanced in a lesson through discussion, skilled teaching assistants will support the class teacher by engaging in dialogue with a particular individual or cohort of pupils.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

- The senior leaders of the school ensure that Religious Education is an absolute priority in the programme of teaching and learning at St Mary's. Religious Education enjoys greater than 10% of the curriculum time provided to pupils.
- The senior leadership team undertakes analysis of the pupils' performance to track progress and identify targets for individuals, key cohorts of pupils and year groups. Pupils' learning skills are monitored through planning scrutiny, book evaluations, pupil interviews and lesson observations.
- All teaching staff are trained to assess pupils' learning and progress in Religious Education.
- Along with the general analysis of Religious Education data compiled by class teachers, the Religious Education subject leader unpicks the relative strengths and issues of progress with particular groups. This analysis is shared with teachers and in turn informs future planning.
- An example of the effectiveness of this approach is the provision for pupils with special needs. Appropriate targets and tasks have been implemented to help these pupils make the gains that they are capable of. This has paid off and the school is seeing better progress with these pupils.
- Whilst monitoring, analysis and planning have been effective in delivering securely good standards, greater rigour would allow the school leaders to fully identify areas for improvement and, in turn, provide more effective interventions.
- The governors are active and challenging in their oversight of the provision of Religious Education. They receive regular reports on progress and participate in monitoring activities when visiting the school.
- Governors have been key in ensuring the quality of delivery by requiring new staff to be well trained in Religious Education and understand the dynamics of teaching the Catholic Faith. The governors' aspiration for strength in religious teaching extends to their succession planning. They seek to develop the staff as they become established in the school and the MAC, so that high quality, faithful teaching and learning is delivered now and in the future.
- Support for new staff is very strong indeed and, within a short time, newer members of staff feel confident and skilled in delivering Religious Education lessons.
- The school has effectively delivered a meaningful and effective programme for pupils' understanding of relationships and sex education, which is in line with the requirements of the Birmingham Diocese and acknowledges advice from the Bishops' Conference. As a

result of continuous review, senior staff and governors have decided to use a newer, more appropriate programme for the delivery of this aspect. School leaders judge that this will better suit the needs of the pupils.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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| The quality of Collective Worship. | Outstanding |
| How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship. | Outstanding |
| The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school. | Outstanding |
| How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship. | Outstanding |

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship. The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.

- Collective Worship at St Mary's Academy is outstanding.
- Pupils engage with and share deep and sacred experiences. Their sincere participation in Collective Worship reflects their understanding of the message of Christ's Word.
- The responses made by pupils during times of reflection clearly demonstrate the impact prayer has on the strengthening of their spirituality.
- The celebration of the Eucharist is at the heart of St Mary's Academy and pupils are always highly reverent and well-behaved during Mass, assembly and liturgy.
- They have a thorough knowledge of traditional prayers, which they recite each day in class and say with conviction when worshipping together.
- As well as regular prayers during the school day, all pupils are able to plan and lead quality prayer in their own class Collective Worship. Often pupils instigate the worship in their desire to share their experiences with others.
- Pupils work together with the staff to design and lead the school and parents in acts of worship. For example, different class groups will take the responsibility for preparing a feast day Mass or writing prayers for a Lenten or Advent liturgies.
- An excellent example of how pupils are inspired and active in Collective Worship is seen in the key stage 1 Reflection Club. This club is run by Year 6 pupils for their younger friends in Year 2. The confident pupil leaders choose a theme and share it through scripture. All pupils participate eagerly and have no hesitation in sharing their inner most thoughts about the spiritual theme presented.
- Pupils have been inspired by the Collective Worship experienced during retreats or visits. For example, following their visit to Alton Castle, the Year 5 pupils felt uplifted and closer to God through prayer.
- The pupils' knowledge of scripture and the influence it has on their lives is remarkable. During Collective Worship they delight in the readings and accounts of Jesus in the Gospels and can make direct links between what they hear in Mass and how they conduct themselves daily. For example, pupils recognise and can explain the powerful messages of the parables.
- Pupils are becoming more familiar with the signs and symbols of the key aspects of the liturgical year. They know the seasonal colours and can identify artefacts, which illustrate the special times in the calendar of the Church.
- The involvement of pupils in the celebration of parish Mass at the weekends demonstrates the significance of Collective Worship to them. Pupils participate in their own liturgy during parish Mass. Many pupils will act as altar servers or assist with the offertory procession. Pupils acknowledge that they were baptised in the Church and that it is a holy place in their lives.

- The value placed by the pupils and their parents on Collective Worship has been very well illustrated in their preparation for receiving the sacraments. Pupils speak sincerely of becoming closer to God through the sacraments. It is evident that the whole school and parish community has been united in prayer as they have undertaken this precious journey of faith together. Pupils, parents, staff and the parish priest bear witness to the grace present in the celebration of the sacraments.
- The school staff team, along with the parish priest, have invested great energy and passion in to the programme of preparation for the sacraments. The pupils have embraced this powerful exploration of faith and grown as individuals as a result. For example, Year 6 pupils, in preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation, could explain with impressive maturity why they had chosen a particular saints' name and what this meant for their future demeanour as a young Christian.
- All members of staff are confident in leading Collective Worship using a variety of forms of prayer effectively. Collective Worship is presented with a high degree of expertise.
- The school has invested in inspirational resources and training for staff. As a result, Masses and assemblies flow well and the themes of the liturgy are illustrated with meaningful graphics.
- More recently, the revised structure has ensured that planning for worship has a clear direction and that pupils have a greater opportunity to reflect on the values and virtues of their faith.
- In order to set themes in the minds and hearts of the pupils the weekly Gospel assembly delivers key messages for the weekend Mass. In this way pupils consolidate their understanding of the life of Jesus and the saints.
- The Wednesday Word publication is given out to families. This vivid publication prompts discussion and awareness at home of the messages of the forthcoming Gospel readings.
- Whole school Mass is celebrated with reverence and the full participation of all. The celebration takes place in school and occasionally in church. Enthusiastic singing and full pupil participation enriches worship. Pupils take a lead in the readings and prayers. At Mass parents, parishioners and governors unite to make the occasion the highlight of the week.
- Collective Worship preparation during hymn practice is delivered with expertise and the full participation of the staff team. Pupils display reverence whilst they sing and are eager to improve their quality and accuracy. Hymn practice is both a worship and learning experience. For example, the staff take the opportunity to make links with the lives of the saints or words from the Bible when explaining the liturgical origins of the lyrics.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

- The Religious Education subject leader plays an important and effective role in monitoring Collective Worship.
- Assemblies are monitored on a termly basis and the spiritual impact is discussed by the senior teachers. Feedback is given to the member of staff who has led the liturgy. As a result, the approach to Collective Worship is more focussed and meaningful for the children.
- Pupils, too, play a part in evaluating Collective Worship. Their views are collected annually and the resulting analysis is used by senior staff and governors to shape and develop the provision for Collective Worship. The greater involvement of pupils in planning and leading liturgy has been one of the results of this monitoring.
- Governors are regularly present at liturgies. They appreciate how the school is attending to the spiritual development of the pupils. As a result of the school

considering the views of governors, there has been greater involvement of pupils in the parish celebrations at the weekend.

- Senior leaders have thought carefully about how the school environment can accommodate the prayers of the school family. One example is the Garden of Peace in the school grounds; a memorial garden for a treasured member of staff. This is a place where pupils and adults can take time for quiet reflection.
- The quality of Collective Worship is supported by the consistent maintenance of sacred areas around school. The Religious Education subject leader ensures that the prayer focus areas in each classroom are sufficiently rich in prayers, pupils' intercessions, illustrations and references to saints and liturgical seasons.
- The observance and patterns of liturgy are embedded in all classrooms. Staff and pupils are well practised in having a focal point, lighting a candle, respecting silence and accepting the contribution of all. As a result, the prayer life of the school is refined and graceful.
- School leaders have established 'Class Saints' where each class is dedicated to a particular saint. On the feast day of their saint the class will lead an assembly, to which parents and governors are invited. In this way, pupils can embrace the qualities of their saints and share grace-filled ideas with the wider school community.
- The school website is attractive and informative and contains both in depth explanations about the foundation of faith in the school, as well as reflections of the pupils' spiritual growth. The website provides signposts for parents to the liturgical events of the year.
- Collective Worship at St Mary's provides the essential opportunities for prayer, where the pupils can give thanks for the value and potential of every member of the school family, as they follow the one accord of Jesus.

SCHOOL DETAILS

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| Unique reference number | 140114 |
| Local authority | Stoke-on-Trent |
| <i>This inspection was carried out under canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the 2005 Education Act.</i> | |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Multi Academy Company |
| Age range | 4 - 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on roll | 242 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of directors |
| Chair | Simon Edge |
| Principal | Ian Beardmore |
| Telephone number | 01782 234820 |
| Website address | www.stmarysstoke.co.uk |
| Email address | office@stmarysnewmman.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 10 th May 2013 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- St Mary's Catholic Academy is an average size primary school serving the parish of Norton le Moors in Stoke on Trent.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 75%.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is below the national average.
- Attainment on entry is in line with the national average.
- Since the last inspection, a new leader for Religious Education has been appointed.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors – Tim Hughes and Christine Finnegan.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- The inspectors observed teaching across eight Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with the executive principal, the Religious Education subject leader, members of the teaching staff, the governors (including the Religious Education link governor) and the parish priest.
- The inspectors attended a whole school Mass, class Collective Worship and undertook learning walks to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, the RE action plan, teachers' planning and learning journals.