



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Denominational (S48) Inspection Report

Name of School: St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Local Authority: Waltham Forest
Inspection Date: 17th March 2020
Reporting Inspector: Mr Stephen Beck

This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 and 2011.

Type of School:	Primary	School Address:
School Category:	Voluntary Aided	Station Road
URN:	103085	Chingford
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11	London,
Gender of pupils:	Mixed	E4 7BJ
Number on roll:	216	Tel. No. 020 8529 4723
Appropriate Authority:	The Governing Body	Headteacher: Ms Philomena Egan
Date of previous inspection:	March 2015	Chair of Governors: Mrs Sherron Alexander-Bedingfield

Information about the school

St Mary's is a voluntary aided one-form entry Catholic primary school in Chingford in the local authority of Waltham Forest and part of the Diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parish of St Teresa of Avila Chingford. There are currently 216 pupils aged 4-11 on roll of whom 100% are Catholics. There is an above average number of pupils at 22% from minority ethnic groups, who speak English as an additional language, with a significant number being at an early stage of English language development. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average at 15.3%. There are 9 pupils eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Mary's is an outstanding, welcoming and inclusive Catholic school offering its pupils a rich faith experience appreciated by the community and referred to by those interviewed as 'the heart of the school'. Its outstanding 'Catholic Life' and Religious Education is firmly centred on the School Mission 'Love God, Love Others, and Love Ourselves' ensuring that its ethos remains true to the Catholic Church's mission in education. As a parent said, *'My husband and I feel incredibly lucky that our two children are lucky enough to attend such a wonderful school whose mission statement truly reflects in everything they do'*.

The school develops confident, articulate and well-rounded young people equipped to maximise their potential and strives to provide the very best outcomes for all pupils. This vision is shared by the strong school leadership, governors and dedicated staff team, who place the spiritual and moral development of pupils as their highest priority. The school fosters positive relationships with families and a strong sense of belonging as stated by one parent, *'St Mary's is a really caring school and it is what we love about it'*. Consequently, pupils are able to thrive, enjoy learning and achieve the highest standards. High expectations of pupils' behaviour ensure pupils are happy and visibly enjoy their time at school with behaviour for learning being a strength. The pupils are caring towards one another and reach out to those in need through a variety of charitable acts. They are proud of the school they attend.

All areas for development since the last inspection have been met. These have included a successful link with Brentwood Youth to provide a retreat experience for Year 6 pupils. School self-evaluation is accurate, with embedded procedures helping leaders know their school well and plan for future school developments and improvements.

The school has a strong family feel and a caring, nurturing ethos, rooted in its individual and collective faith, which is central to creating a warm and welcoming environment in the school. There is a tangible sense of everyone working together as a tightly knit family where achievement is encouraged and celebrated and relationships are highly valued. Teachers know their pupils well as individuals. Consequently, they approach their work with high levels of independence and creativity across a broad and balanced curriculum. It is a vibrant community within a wider community of people including those of other faiths and beliefs and all pupils learn to value others as part of an extended family. The values of the school reflect the pupils' backgrounds, cultures and the wider society in which they live.

The resolute headteacher has established a strong school leadership team and together they provide leadership that is dynamic. It is driven by her enthusiasm and ability to inspire people through enabling them to develop and achieve, thereby creating potential Catholic leaders for the future. This also engenders in both staff and pupils considerable self-worth and confidence and creates a shared vision that makes St Mary's the beacon of Catholic education it is. She is well supported by a highly effective governing body with a broad skill set, under the leadership of a knowledgeable, insightful Chair, who ensures they both challenge and support.

The effectiveness of the school was summed up in a parent's response on their questionnaire return on which they wrote, *'We feel highly privileged that our child is being educated at St Mary's. The school truly proclaims the Gospel in everything it does, both in words and actions. God's love is experienced in every interaction, encouraging the children to understand the world we live in and their place in it. The staff are building the kingdom every day with outstanding spiritual, educational and pastoral practice. We are blessed to be part of the St Mary's family'*.

What the school should do to improve further:

With no identified significant areas for development, the school should continue its work on the areas identified in its self-evaluation and Religious Education action plan, with particular reference to;

- Validating the recently established excellent internal Religious Education assessment through the development of regular inter-school moderation to ratify its school-based assessments.
- Expanding opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles to include a faith-based group that would further support the development of pupil skills to plan, prepare and lead collective worship with confidence.

CATHOLIC LIFE

Grade 1

The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. Almost all pupils at St Mary's are committed to the school's mission. They are actively involved and benefit greatly from their participation in the 'Catholic Life of the School'. Pupils know how the school's mission relates to them in their own lives. High levels of involvement in Catholic Life illustrate a commitment to their faith. Pupils embrace their faith and show deep respect for others in their community. They listen to their peers, show understanding, tolerance and, when called for, forgiveness. They spoke confidently about their faith, charitable contributions and prayer life. Almost all pupils are aware of what it means to be part of a Catholic school community and they eagerly embrace the opportunities offered to celebrate and serve it. Pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility, such as peer mediators and do so proudly. These could now be extended to widen these opportunities and strengthen pupil voice.

Pupils are alert to the needs of others in the wider community. Over the past few years, the pupils have been inspired to raise money for or support a range of charities. Some have also been involved in a citizenship programme where they have had the opportunity to consider a specific issue and build a campaign looking to resolve it. Recent campaigns include greener air and campaigning for a lollipop person at a local zebra crossing. The school also worked closely with the local C of E school to campaign for speed restrictions along Kings Road and the installation of a pelican crossing. This all serves to strengthen the pupils understanding of their rights and responsibilities in the local community. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary with those requiring additional support receiving it.

The family ethos, open-door policy and pastoral support are valued strengths of the school. A parent wrote, *'... We have been through a tough time as a family and the support, kindness and caring we have received as a whole family has been second to none. ...'*. The school offers a well-planned Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme along with Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) based on the 'Journey in Love' programme. Pupils enjoy these lessons and appear confident in their stage of physical, emotional and spiritual growth. The school has also undertaken a focus on mental health and well-being of pupils and staff by encouraging a 'culture of conversation' and decisive action to identify and support all members of the school community. This is an exemplar that could usefully be more widely shared. Pupils understand what it means to have a vocation and can give examples of when they have served the school or community. Staff are committed fully to the implementation of the school's mission. They pray together and plan for their continuing formation.

Leaders are committed to developing the school's mission in education and do this through highly effective and well-planned Continuous Professional Development (CPD). There are many visible outward signs of catholicity effectively promoting the Catholic character of St Mary's.

The school provides many opportunities for the moral and spiritual development of the whole community. The culture of Catholic Life at St Mary's is such that it pays equal attention to the pastoral needs of members of staff, ensuring that these needs are met. Parents speak highly of the school and the Catholic Life it exudes. Parents have a thorough understanding of the school's mission and are supportive of it with one commenting *"the school has not only provided my child with an excellent education but has also instilled values, which we share at home, guiding them in a way to live your life which inspires others and makes a difference"*. The governing body is highly ambitious for 'Catholic Life of the School' and leads by example.

Spiritual and moral development led by a dedicated and knowledgeable leadership team. The importance they place on Catholic ethos is evident the moment you walk in the school. The front lobby has an outstanding whole school display linked to a current Religious Education theme and impressive classroom displays support the Religious Education topics being covered. Focal areas are created in the classrooms, the school hall and sometimes in the outdoor environment. These enable the pupils to make links to the theme and create sacred spaces to enhance worship. Prayer and worship are used effectively as a source of inspiration to help pupils and staff members reflect upon their lives and mission. Pupils are enabled to pray formally and informally using a variety of prayer methods and styles. Traditional prayers, pupils' own prayers, liturgies and hymns are chosen appropriately to deepen pupils' relationship with God. They experience a range of prayerful experiences as individuals, in small groups and as a whole class and in entire school settings. Through their time at St Mary's, pupils develop an ability to clearly articulate the difference a community of prayer has made to their own identity, security and growth, particularly at a time of need. The school has a strong family feeling and a caring nurturing ethos, rooted in individual and collective faith, which is central to the life of the school.

The leadership team is outstanding in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for the 'Catholic Life of the School' and in how they plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils. They show an excellent understanding of a commitment to the Church's mission for education. They are deeply committed to the core responsibility of ensuring the development and sustenance of the Catholic ethos of the school. Through reflective self-evaluation, the SMT is able to identify and look at ways to move forward in a productive way. Governors fulfil their responsibilities very well. They are fully committed and deeply involved in the Catholic life of the school. They have effectively helped to shape the direction of the school through their cohesive and challenging practice. The Governors have actively encouraged and been fully supportive of the Head's appointment as a trustee of the Cardinal Hume Centre, a homeless charity based in Westminster, founded by the Cardinal. The exchange of knowledge and skills will foster and strengthen the school.

St Mary's is a confident, outward-looking school, happy to share its outstanding practice and mindful of its role to serve the Common Good in its community and beyond. The school is a true beacon of Catholic education. It works hard to foster parish links and makes as good a use as possible of the closely linked parish church. As a parent commented on their questionnaire, *'We would love to see the parish more present in school to support the school community. We cannot fault the Catholic education the school is providing'*. There is a willingness on behalf of the school, insofar as it is enabled, to develop these links further.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Grade 1

Religious education at St Mary's is outstanding. The rich curriculum fully delivers the themes of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory using the 'Come and See' Religious Education programme recommended by the Diocese of Brentwood. The Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning because it ensures that all pupils progress in their knowledge, understanding and response to the Catholic faith. Pupils know and understand what they must do to succeed and progress and clear success criteria are shared with them before they start a piece of work.

Classes were observed on the day of the inspection and every lesson was judged to be outstanding. School data reflects this and confirms teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education is never less than consistently good with the majority being outstanding. It is highly effective in enthusing pupils

and ensures that they learn exceptionally well. Lessons seen were inventive, built upon prior learning and tackled difficult questions head-on. They were pitched accurately with differentiation through input and questioning. Teachers check learning within the lesson regularly to ensure that all pupils clearly understand what they are doing. Classroom space is used well so that lessons can offer a range of teaching styles and strategies, which are deployed to motivate and inspire pupils appropriate to their age, learning style and interest. This includes drama and hot seating. Other aspects include paired, group work, the use of different writing genres and links with art, music and ICT. The needs of all types of learners are thus duly considered and catered for. Pupils said they enjoyed their learning and how teachers helped them understand, remarking that, *'If you want help someone is always there'*. The majority of Religious Education lessons include a quiet, reflective time for pupils to consider the meaning of their learning for themselves and to relate it to their day-to-day lives, thus developing the spiritual life of themselves and the adults supporting them.

Religious Education is the *'Golden Thread'* that runs through the entire curriculum and school life at St Mary's. All staff ensure that the Catholic nature of the school permeates all aspects of school life. Every opportunity is taken to weave the Gospel values and Church teachings into the curriculum with a focus on 'developing the 'whole child'', which is seen as a core purpose. There is a clear moral code, based on the teachings of Christ, which underpins all policies in the school and is understood and acted on by all members of staff. Use of rewards and sanctions further emphasise the development of this moral code. Religious Education books are special and precious to both pupils and teachers, evidenced by the quality of work, the standard of presentation and the care of them. Marking of pupils' work is exemplary. Effort and achievement are celebrated through targeted marking, verbal encouragement and meaningful praise and are central to the teachers' assessment strategy. To ensure consistency across the school, the school uses the Age-Related Standards in Religious Education and 'Come and See' assessment sheets. The school has made excellent progress in developing rigorous assessment under the new framework. This is in line with other curriculum areas utilising the schools' Target Tracker assessment programme. This has been done by a dedicated, hardworking and knowledgeable assessment lead. The school recognises that, in order to validate its assessments, it needs to establish some regular inter-school moderation, possibly through the Aquinas Trust. Teaching assistants and additional adults are deployed exceptionally efficiently and effectively to extend and support learning. They make considerable contributions to pupils' progress and achievement. There is excellent communication between teachers and support staff members to ensure all adults are aware of pupils' tasks, needs and issues. As a result, the achievement and progress of all children are consistently high. Pupils are given an excellent start to their education in Foundation stage and this is successfully built on year by year as the pupils move through the school with a significant number being above expected at Year 6.

The Governors' involvement in the self-review process (e.g. the School Integrated Development Plan, RE SDP, RE SEF, and policies) has given them a good insight into the school's work in Religious Education. Regular updates in the Headteacher's report highlight the development of the Catholic Mission at the school. Governor meetings and governor training take place during the school day, ensuring a 'hands-on' knowledge of the 'day to day' life of the school. There is high attendance of governors at a range of school events, including Collective Worship and whole school events and celebrations. All are deeply committed to the school and work tirelessly with the Headteacher and SLT to ensure St Mary's is the very best it can be.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Grade 1

Collective Worship is intrinsic to the life of the school and forms the heart of every school celebration. Praying together is part of the daily experience for all pupils and staff. Pupils' response to and participation in the school's Collective Worship is outstanding. They sing joyfully, reflect in silence and join in community prayer confidently in an age-appropriate manner. All pupils participate with enthusiasm and respect in acts of Collective Worship. Pupils are at ease when praying in school.

Their response in both large and small gatherings is reverent and spiritual. As one pupil said, *'I like praying here as we get to spend time with God, it makes me feel calmer inside'*.

When offered, pupils readily take an active part in leading acts of Collective Worship. Adults are excellent role models, which significantly contributes to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Almost all pupils have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts. Appropriate to their age and ability, pupils can confidently choose significant artefacts to furnish the focal point, including relevant scripture to enhance the worship itself. Staff have become skilled in enabling pupils to confidently plan, prepare and lead Collective Worship. From the earliest stages, pupils recognise the unique nature of prayer and show respect. They are aware that religious beliefs are important, demonstrating respect for their faith and the faith of others.

Collective Worship is shared with parents and the wider community at key points throughout the year. The school day is punctuated by prayer and as a result, pupils are confident in the common prayers of the Church. Each class setting has a well-resourced area set aside and this is focused on the appropriate season of the Church.

The Headteacher and other staff display expert knowledge of how to plan and deliver high-quality experiences of Collective Worship. They have an evident understanding of the Church's liturgical year and use this to very good effect in leading the school. Leaders prioritise the liturgical development for all in school and ensure that time is devoted to it. Collective Worship is promoted throughout the school with colourful displays in classrooms and shared spaces, which help pupils to understand the essential elements that are found in outstanding Collective Worship.

At interview, pupils spoke about how they enjoyed their times of worship, particularly the times they were actively involved in it and also when they could be silent and calm. Pupils have a very good understanding of the liturgical structure of worship, the Church seasons and feasts and of the approaches these require in the planning of appropriate worship. This should impact positively on the development of future practice. The school could usefully expand pupils' opportunities to undertake a broader range of leadership roles. This could include a faith-based group that would take forward the schools planned development of pupils' skills to plan, prepare and lead worship initially at a class level.

The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils irrespective of ability. A parent noted, *'I had to make a difficult choice to send my child to St Mary's. If she attended where I work, I would have had no childcare issues. I chose St Mary's because of the fantastic religious ethos and education. We are very happy with our choice'*.

Pupils have a well-developed sense of respect for those of other faiths. This is reflected in the manner in which many pupils participate in prayer and liturgy. Parents and parishioners are welcomed and take advantage of the opportunities offered by the school to be involved in worship. Senior leaders lead quality Collective Worship experiences for both staff and pupils and are models of good practice. The views of pupils, staff and parents are valued and acted upon to ensure good quality Collective Worship continues to evolve throughout the school.