



DIOCESAN CANONICAL INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL, RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Lyme Road, Axminster, Devon, EX13 5BE

School URN:	140772
Inspection Date:	30 January 2020
Inspectors:	Fionuala Boucher & Amanda Greaves

Overall Effectiveness	Previous Inspection:	Requires Improvement	3
	This Inspection:	Good	2
Catholic Life:		Good	2
Religious Education:		Requires Improvement	3
Collective Worship:		Good	2

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Mary's is a good Catholic school.

- St Mary's is a caring and inclusive school which boasts a strong sense of belonging and community. Since the last diocesan inspection, the school has been through a period of immense change – emerging now into a more stable and cohesive position where there is a relentless drive for improvement. The high level of pastoral care offered by the school to pupils, families and staff members is palpable. This is impacting positively on pupil numbers; the school is oversubscribed for September 2020.
- The Catholic Life of the school is a strength. Through determination and good role modelling, the Headteacher is at the forefront of positive change: she is growing the community spirit so that everyone feels the benefit and impact of 'living, loving and learning with God'. Pupils are keen to help others and, although this work is in its infancy, they are driving projects within the local area. They thrive on their values of STAR: safe, trust, achievement, resilience.
- Though teaching and learning in Religious Education requires improvement, staff knowledge and understanding of the subject has increased since the last inspection. Pupils behave well in classes; they share ideas with learning partners and enjoy opportunities to be active within lessons. Leaders have ensured that continuous professional development remains a high priority for teachers. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils and contribute to learners' success in lessons.
- Collective Worship within the school is good and improving. Pupils are reverent; they sing exceptionally well during praise which lifts the spirits during worship. The next step is for pupils to take more ownership, planning and leading liturgy regularly from the earliest years within their classrooms, across key stages and for the whole school. Leaders, including governors, are visible models of good practice. All staff support and encourage participation as one community.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a smaller than average primary school with 130 pupils on roll.
- The school serves the parishes of Axminster, Chard, Seaton, Lyme Regis, Honiton and Ottery St Mary.
- St Mary's became part of Plymouth CAST Catholic Multi-Academy Trust in April 2014.
- Of the 130 pupils on roll, 9% are Catholic, 49% are from other Christian backgrounds and 2.3% have other religious affiliations.
- The proportion of pupils who have an Education and Health Care Plan is 2% which is below the national average; 28 pupils (21%) have special educational needs.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium is 16%; this is in-line with the national average figure.
- Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in the staffing and governance of the school, including the appointment of a new Headteacher in September 2018.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Religious Education:
 - Ensure that pupils have more opportunities to show what they know and understand through extended tasks which allow them to make links from a wider repertoire of sources they currently experience in school, such as scripture, hymns, parts of the Mass and charitable causes supported by the school on a global, national or local scale.
 - Make more explicit connections between the learning objectives, driver words and relevant tasks, ensuring that all groups make the necessary progress over time
- Collective Worship:
 - Further empower pupil voice and leadership skills by
 - embedding child-led liturgy across the school
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to respond during worship
 - evaluating Collective Worship more consistently in order to plan for improvement

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL	2
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- 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.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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

- Pupils at St Mary’s appreciate and value the Catholic ethos of the school. They refer to the mission statement ‘Living, Loving and Learning with God’ with confidence and live it out in their daily interactions with each other. They express the view that their school helps them ‘to be more like Jesus by helping each other, saying sorry and being forgiving’. They understand that they are called to help their friends and resolve their differences through restorative approaches.
- Pupils show a respect for themselves and each other as members of a Catholic community. They share an awareness of each other’s needs and recognise their responsibility to care and look after each other. Pupils are keen to support members of their school and wider community through the projects which they initiate with the support of the Pastoral Worker.
- Most pupils value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and its links with the parish and diocese. As a result, they appreciate opportunities to grow their faith through their links with the parish priest and the wider parish communities. The Gift Team are keen to ‘go out into the community ... sharing God’s love, building trust and develop relationships with the local community’.
- Pupils’ personal support is good and a key driver of school improvement. This is evident in the happy and confident way in which pupils conduct themselves in and around the school, relate to each other and resolve minor disagreements. If things go wrong, they say, ‘We have some time together, talk things through and then go back to the right choices: we can reflect and be on the right track again.’

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school – good

- Vision and mission are clearly embedded within the school: it is visible in policies, documents and on the school website. The school displays the distinctive nature of the Catholic Life of this school in every corner of the building.
- The headteacher and local governors are key to the success of the Catholic Life of the school, where their commitment to the Catholic faith and visible presence within the parish and community is valued by the parents and other staff members.
- The mission statement is embraced fully by all stakeholders. There is clear evidence to show that the school is committed to further developing the skills of staff. The Headteacher is resolved to involve the staff in the formation of a prayerful community.
- The school's strong leadership has enabled excellent relationships between all stakeholders to grow and be nurtured. Staff promote high standards of behaviour. There is a culture of trust; parents describe good links between the school, parents and parish. There is a sense of a community working in partnership for the good of all stakeholders.
- The development and improvements of the school over the last 18 months or so is grounded in the school's ambition to embed principles of Catholic Social Teaching, inspiring the school to grow in unity as a faith community. This aspect has the capacity to galvanize the pupils so that they are intrinsically involved in the school's faith-based action plans and activities. For example, pupil chaplaincy training is imminent.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school – good

- Leaders and governors demonstrate a whole-hearted commitment to the mission of the Church and are well regarded as models of Catholic leadership by staff, pupils and parents. The development of Catholic Life is central to the work of leaders and governors ensuring 'Christ is at the heart of the school'.
- Staff training and continued professional development is a priority for leaders. The Headteacher describes this as an 'organic' approach, improving staff knowledge and confidence in the improvements required by the school. This collegiate style reinforces the sense of community and belonging for all staff.
- Governors regularly visit the school undertaking various tasks that ensure that all staff have access to professional development and wider support. Leaders keep up to date with the Bishops' vision for the diocese, attending all relevant courses and responding quickly to any initiatives and action. The governors are active within the school, for example by supporting new members of staff pastorally and 'hearing readers'.
- The school benefits from excellent support and relationship with the parish priest who sees himself as a 'resource and friend to the school', teaching Maths and Latin, immersing himself fully in school life. Parents talk about the symbiotic relationship between the school and parish: they discuss the 'Thursday Coffee and Cake' (held in the parish after school drop off for parishioners and parents) and gardening projects as examples of how school and parish links are strengthening.
- The school has strategies for engaging with the majority of parents for the good of the community. As a result, parents talk positively about the school and how it welcomes parents for events. One parent shared that there are plenty of opportunities to be involved and welcomed – and was glad to have chosen St Mary's specifically for its 'kindness'.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	3
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education. 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education. 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education. 	2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education – requires improvement

- Pupils are positive about their lessons in Religious Education. They are open to their learning, behave well and make good verbal contributions. They particularly enjoy opportunities to carry out research and participate in discussion to share their ideas and clarify their thinking.
- For historical reasons, there is little evidence to date of pupils’ progress over time and it is therefore difficult to ascertain pupils’ achievement in Religious Education. However, the current culture in the school is enabling pupils from this academic year onwards to increase their enjoyment of the subject. There are emerging opportunities, therefore, to identify those pupils who not only meet the expected standard but show a flair for Religious Education and therefore may be working at greater depth in this subject.
- Pupils can reflect and make links in some aspects of their work. For example, they remember details from one Bible story which strike a chord when learning about another – such as the theme of loving care within the Good Samaritan and the Lost Sheep parables. Pupils in Foundation stage are beginning to make good links to scripture and explore how Religious Education has an impact in their daily lives: small world activities, drama and artwork support this view.
- Pupils report that the best lessons are those in which they can be creative and more active, such as carrying out tasks involving information technology, drama and the arts. Increased opportunities for pupil voice in lessons would enable further progress to be visible in lessons and across time.
- Pupils work willingly in lessons. They are now ready to further develop their creativity in written work and lengthen pieces within workbooks, showing greater stamina in keeping with their age and capability.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education – requires improvement

- Teachers' ability to plan and deliver lessons in line with the school's syllabus is improving. This is due to both the focus placed on and engagement with professional development as well as the commitment of staff to work hard when teaching Religious Education. Assessment systems are newly in place, which should support development of this important subject.
- As a consequence of teachers gaining knowledge and confidence in their own practice, pupils apply themselves in lessons and the indications are that, over time, good progress can be made and evidenced. Time management and pace in lessons is appropriate to the pupils' ages and stages. Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is considered in line with diocesan expectations.
- There is an emphasis in most lessons of teachers imparting knowledge to pupils through direct teacher talk. Staff now need to ensure that there are increased opportunities for collaborative working in Religious Education lessons, providing more active learning and reducing passive listening sessions. Frameworks and worksheets sometimes limit learners, so the chance to write more freely in books would open up the possibility for pupils to develop independence and allow those with a flair for Religious Education to reach greater depth in their learning.
- Resourcing is good in the school. Pupils have access to a range of materials to support and enhance lessons; the environment is highly conducive to a positive working atmosphere. Teaching assistants are an asset, since they are proactive with learners; they contribute effectively and are well informed by teachers about the lesson content.
- Work is well-celebrated, which is a good motivator for pupils who are keen to do well. Prayer resources and 'Brown Books' on the focus tables are very well used to capture the wider aspects of Religious Education as well as other aspects of personal development. These displays are in prominent areas in all classrooms: they reflect the current unit of work, are attractively presented and are clearly cherished by pupils and staff alike.

The extent to which leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education – good

- Leaders and governors ensure the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and in each key stage. The dedicated time of 10% is also allocated to reinforce its centrality to the schools' Catholic identity.
- The school embraces and implements additional requirements and initiatives recommended by the Diocese. This term the school has had a shared over-arching theme taken from Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* – our Common Home. This has resulted in the production of high-quality artwork and a focus on the joy of 'giving' developed through a series of whole school and class charity events led by the Gift Team.
- Whilst the importance and profile of Religious Education is comparable to other core subjects, such as English and Maths, some aspects of monitoring and evaluating the subject could be sharper to ensure that all pupils are given opportunities to respond to quality feedback in a more systematic manner.
- The headteacher, who is also the Religious Education Curriculum Leader, has a clear vision for teaching and learning and is well positioned to secure this vision, taking the school into its next phase of development.
- Leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education is effectively planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils and to ensure coherence across all phases and key stages. This is mirrored in the spending for RE resources, which has risen above the spending in other core areas of the curriculum this year.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP	2
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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for the Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship – good

- Pupils act with reverence during worship, showing respect for the occasion and those around them. They reflect in silence, participate fully in prayer and show thoughtfulness when considering the theme and tone of worship opportunities.
- Pupils sing with joyfulness and to an exceptionally high standard. They contribute to the mood of the liturgy through the use of their musical gifts, creating an inspiring sense of community.
- Pupil have opportunities to lead prayer and they have experience of writing prayer intentions. They set out prayer and focus tables in classrooms and in communal areas around the setting. Pupils now need to have further experience of planning and leading worship on a regular basis and within a variety of groupings – class-based, for their key stage and within a whole school gathering.
- Pupils appreciate the time they spend together in worship. They speak enthusiastically about school Masses, saying, “We pray and we have a special time, where we are even more focused. Father blesses us and we sing songs and say sorry to God.”
- Individual prayer journals support children’s faith development. Pupils recognize that prayer and worship have a direct impact on their own formation: they like to be chosen by their class teachers to read the scripture and/ or prayers available on the interactive whiteboard in class gatherings; they would like to increase opportunities to handle Bibles themselves and locate passages independently.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship – requires improvement

- Collective Worship is clearly part of the life of the school. Pupils and staff talk positively about the times they gather for whole school and class worship, including Tuesday Praise (where they enjoy singing hymns). Staff are supportive in their involvement, reading scripture and leading liturgy and song.
- The headteacher is pivotal in the development of Collective Worship in the school. She leads by example, sharing clear message and purpose in liturgy, posing questions to encourage depth of thought in pupils and equipping others with the language associated with leading worship.
- Pupils feel involved in aspects of liturgy, though they are not yet independent in planning and leading these on a regular basis or in a wide variety of ways. Staff are in an increasingly good position now to

further develop their own skills in order to help pupils to take on further responsibility so that the methods and styles of worship diversify and develop according to the pupils' ideas and levels of confidence.

- Opportunities for worship are planned in a manner which facilitate attendance by other adults associated with the school – including committed governors. Parents report that they value times when they are involved to join school worship and special occasions.
- The school benefits from a committed staff who, although not all necessarily of the Catholic faith themselves, are wholly supportive of and committed to the pupils gaining the most from being part of this faith-based school family where worship features highly in daily life.

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

- Leaders have a solid knowledge of how to plan and deliver quality Collective Worship. This falls mainly to the Headteacher, although she has good support from the parish priest and strong parish links upon which to draw.
- The Church's liturgical year is well-known and understood by the school leadership, which supports staff and children in developing their own understanding of seasons and feasts. This is evident in the environment, artefacts, pupils' work and feedback from discussion.
- School leaders rightly evaluate the impact Collective Worship has upon other aspects of school life, including pupils' development in Religious Education and wider personal growth. The trust and diocesan team are highly supportive of the headteacher and recognize the improvements being made in respect of Collective Worship through joint monitoring activities.
- The Headteacher reflects on the quality and impact of Collective Worship taking into account the school's drive to develop in pupils an understanding of Catholic Social Teaching. Further professional development to extend the knowledge of colleagues would enhance Collective Worship and strengthen provision. Through the use of formal monitoring and evaluation systems, leaders and governors would be in a good position to evidence continued improvement in this area.

SCHOOL DETAILS

School Name	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Unique Reference Number	140772
CMAT	Plymouth Cast Catholic Multi-Academy Trust

The inspection of this school was carried out on behalf of the Bishop of Plymouth under Canon 806 of Canon Law in accordance with the *evaluation schedule* for diocesan canonical inspections in the Diocese of Plymouth. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. The process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule is in line with the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA).

During the inspection, the inspectors observed 5 Religious Education lessons and 1 Act of Collective Worship.

Meetings were held with the headteacher (who is also the subject leader for Religious Education), the chair of governors, the safeguarding governor, the pastoral worker and the parish priest. Discussions were also held with staff, pupils and parents.

The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including reports of the local governing body, action plans, the school development plan, monitoring forms, assessment information and parental response forms. Inspectors also examined the work in pupils' Religious Education books.

Chair of Governors:	Teresa Dicker
Headteacher:	Elaine Mannix
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WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN

Within the report, the following grades are used:

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

In the context of the whole school, the overall effectiveness grades have the following meaning:

Grade 1	Outstanding	The school is a highly effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are exceptionally well met.
Grade 2	Good	The school is an effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are met well.
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	The school is not yet a good Catholic school, it is not inadequate however, and there are aspects that require improvement. There will be a monitoring visit within the next 12 months and the school will be re-inspected within 3 years.
Grade 4	Inadequate	There are features in need of urgent and immediate attention. The school is not meeting the basic minimum requirement for adequacy as a Catholic school. The school will receive an annual monitoring visit and will be re-inspected within 3 years.

In addition to the information above, if any one aspect of the evaluation schedule is found to 'require improvement', the school will receive a monitoring visit for this aspect within one year of the publication of the report.