

# DIOCESE OF MIDDLESBROUGH

Inspection of Religious Education  
Collective Worship  
and  
The Catholic Life of the School



**School:** St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

**Address:** Tennyson Avenue  
Grangetown , Middlesbrough TS6 7AD

**URN:** 131909

**Email address:** st\_marys\_primary\_school@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

**Headteacher:** Mrs Chris Ruddy

**Chair:** Mr John Buckton

**Date:** March 19 & 20<sup>th</sup> 2013

**Inspector:** Mr MJ Gallagher

## INTRODUCTION

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Bishop of Middlesbrough (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school. The Inspection reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school's witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation. The Inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.

### What Inspection Grades mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding Catholic school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a Catholic school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory Catholic school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate Catholic school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils.

© 2009 copyright – Diocese of Middlesbrough. This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated. Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a smaller than average size primary school located in the Grangetown district of Middlesbrough, an area of significant social and economic deprivation. The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The number of children with special educational needs and those with a Statement of Educational Needs is also above the national average. Almost all of the pupils are from a white British heritage background, 75% are baptised Catholic and only one child has English as an additional language.

The school has had a turbulent history since its previous inspection beginning with a serious arson attack in the autumn of 2007 when a large area of the building was destroyed and the children had to move to the nearby church hall whilst their school was rebuilt. The present Headteacher took up her position in January 2008 and has had to manage a number of serious long term staffing issues but, with the support of a very effective Governing Body and the LA's School Improvement Partner, these issues have recently been resolved and the school is well placed to make rapid improvement.

**Pupil Catchment:**

Number of pupils on roll: 148

Planned Admission Number of Pupils:30

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 75%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian Denominations: 18%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 0%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 7%

Percentage of pupils with special needs: 27%

**Teaching Staff:**

Full-time Teachers: 7 + Headteacher

Part-time Teachers: 1

Percentage of Catholic Teachers: 28%

**Support Staff:**

Full-time Classroom Support Staff:10

Part-time Classroom Support Staff: 0

Percentage of Catholic Classroom Support Staff: 50%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 14%

**Percentage of learning time given to R.E:**

10% in all classes

**Parishes served by the School:**

St Andrew's, Teesville, St Anne's, Eston and St Peter's, South Bank

# 1.OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

2

## MAIN FINDINGS

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School is a good Catholic school. The Parish Sister related the many challenges the school and its community face on a daily basis. The Parish Priest described the school as, 'Mission territory, located in a deprived social area where each child is cherished and nurtured'. School leaders however, are inspired by the demands of the locality and are determined to give their pupils the best possible start in life. Although the term 'Christ at the Centre' was never mentioned during the inspection it was evident that this is very much the case in St Mary's where mutual respect among governors, staff members, parents and children is the foundation of this Catholic community. The dedicated and hard-working Headteacher has provided a safe and happy environment where pupils enjoy their learning. The variety of lively displays in the hall indicate the involvement the pupils have in the Catholic life of the school and those in the classrooms show their current topics in their Religious Education lessons.

Parents are very proud of their school and recognise the efforts all staff make to encourage their children to succeed. They spoke of the ease of approaching staff and how issues were quickly resolved. One father spoke of, 'how he was listened to' and how, 'his views were respected'.

The quality of teaching of Religious Education in St Mary's is good as is the progress pupils make in their learning but attainment is, as yet, only average because assessment procedures, although in place, are not yet sufficiently embedded to have had sufficient impact in raising standards. Collective worship overall is good but pupils experience in leading and organising their own liturgies is limited. The pupils' involvement in the Catholic life of the school is good.

As a result of the Headteacher's commitment to improve and the excellent support she receives from the Governing Body the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

### **What the school needs to do to improve further.**

#### **Raise standards in teaching of Religious Education by;**

- providing opportunities for all staff to observe outstanding practices in other schools

#### **Raise standards in pupils' learning in Religious Education by;**

- consistently applying the school's marking policy in all classes
- using the 'I Can' statements in all classes to inform pupils' learning
- using the principles of Assessment for Learning in Religious Education lessons
- Rigorously monitoring the teaching of Religious Education to ensure consistent practice throughout the school.

#### **Inform the teaching of Religious Education by;**

- Attending 'Godly Play' training so that all staff know how to use it effectively in supporting the 'Come and See' programme

#### **Support the Prayer Life and Collective Worship by**

- developing further the role of the chaplaincy team so that they might support pupils in planning and delivering their own liturgies
- reviewing the school's Mission Statement to reflect this new stage in its development

## 2. PUPILS

**How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups.**

2

Pupils are enthusiastic about their Religious Education lessons. They contribute positively in classes and are eager to discuss issues and answer questions. They have a good knowledge of scripture and are skilled at finding texts in their bibles. Their behaviour in all classes was good and as a result of that and the good teaching they receive the progress they make in their learning is good.

Children with Special Educational Needs, disabilities and Statements of Educational Needs are very well supported and make good progress. The care and support given to one vulnerable child observed during the inspection was outstanding.

Pupils enter St Mary's School with attainment that is well below that expected nationally. By the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 standards in English and Mathematics are generally above expectations. The school, with the support of the LA, has in place plans to address weaknesses. This rigorous monitoring and, resulting planned action, is not yet being applied to Religious Education. It was evident, from the Religious Education book scrutiny, that the school's marking policy was not being consistently applied across the school and that expectations in writing in Religious Education, in some cases, were lower than those expected in English. The school's tracking system shows that, by the end of 2013, attainment will be at least average at the end of both Key Stages.

The extent to which the pupils contribute to the Catholic life of the school is good. They are respectful of one another. The older children are especially caring of those younger, this was evident at meal times, on the playground and it was also described by parents as a strength of the school. Pupils are proud of their involvement in raising money for charities and described, in detail, their efforts made to raise funds for Cafod, Comic Relief through Sing-alongs and cake baking. The introduction of the 'Statements to live by' has had a great impact on the pupils. They were eager to explain what the current week's statement was and what it meant for them. 'Reverence' and 'respect' were words used by pupils in all classes observed and in formal and informal discussions.

Pupils responded enthusiastically in Acts of Worship, they entered the hall quietly and carried out their allocated task with ease and confidence but they lacked experience in planning and leading their own liturgies yet felt that they were capable of doing so.

• How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education?	2
❖ <i>the quality of pupils' learning and their progress</i>	2
❖ <i>the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress in Religious Education</i>	2
❖ <i>pupils' attainment in Religious Education</i>	3
• To what extent do pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school?	2
• How well do pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship?	3

### 3. Provision

#### How effective the provision is for Catholic education

2

The quality of teaching observed in all lessons was good and as result the progress that pupils made was good. Learning objectives were shared and questioning by the teachers challenge pupils' thinking. In the Early Years class the teacher confidently adapted a story about buckets to extend the pupils writing in Religious Education while highlighting the need to help others by filling their imaginary bucket with positive things while being careful not to empty it by being negative. Storytelling and questioning techniques from Godly Play were used effectively in Key Stage 1 to engage pupils in their learning. The high quality teaching observed in the Year 5/6 class resulted in those pupils working at a very high level and making excellent progress. They used the St John's Gospel to explore the meaning of the Bread of Life with their teacher and through discussion, linked it to their previous learning in their topic on Communion, came to conclusions that showed insight and depth.

Resources for supporting the 'Come and See' programme are in place and used effectively but the use of support staff in the classroom is very effective and is instrumental in enabling all groups to make progress.

A whole school tracking system is in place and is effective in highlighting areas of individual underperformance. Pupils' books are marked regularly but the use of the 'I Can' statements has only recently been introduced and pupils are not yet skilled in their use.

The Religious Education curriculum provided by St Mary's meets the Bishop's requirements as it is based on the recently introduced 'Come and See' programme that is planned and delivered effectively.

Acts of worship are central to the school's work, monthly Masses organised by each class in turn are well attended by parents, governors and parishioners.

A whole-school act of worship, led by the Headteacher, was observed, the pupils were reverent, and attentive. They read well, answered confidently and sang beautifully. Parents were welcomed to the Early Years class act of worship observed: it was reverent and prayerful. By the relaxed manner of the parents having coffee afterwards it was evident that this was a regular occurrence and one that they valued.

The quality of the Catholic life of the school is good. The displays in the hall and in each of the classroom are lively and imaginative informing visitors of the current work of the school. The chaplaincy team supports the school in its work and the Headteacher is a member of the Parish's Sacramental team.

The school's Mission Statement is prominent in the school hall but goes largely unnoticed by the pupils even though it was reviewed by the Governing Body in 2012.

• The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	2
• The effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education	3
• The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
• The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2
• The quality of provision for the Catholic life of the school	2

## 4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school

Leaders and managers are a strength of St Mary's. This is evident in the manner they successfully dealt with some recent serious staffing issues. The Headteacher took responsibility for leading Religious Education in December 2012 after the retirement of the previous subject leader. She has achieved a tremendous amount in a very short time, knows where the weaknesses are and has the ability and determination to address them. The school is well served by a chaplaincy team led by the Parish Sister. The pupils spoke positively of the support they received from the team in planning acts of worship and prayer, for example organising the monthly Masses and simplifying the Stations of the Cross for them.

The progress of all pupils and the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education are monitored by leaders and managers but the rigour is not on a par with other core subjects. As a result there are weaknesses in assessment and target setting, for example, the children know what their targets are in English but not in Religious Education. The marking policy is not consistently applied and the 'I Can' statements are not used effectively. The Headteacher is aware of what the school has to do to address these weaknesses and she is determined that they be addressed immediately.

The Chair and Vice chair of Governors are a strength of St Mary's School. They are knowledgeable, well organised and are not afraid to confront problems head on and solve them. They are determined that St Mary's School will be a beacon in Grangetown doing its utmost to serve its pupils and parents. They provide invaluable support for the Headteacher and staff in facing everyday challenges and are very aware of what the school needs to do to improve. The balance between support and challenge provided by the Governing Body for the Headteacher is just right. It discharges its statutory and canonical duties effectively.

The school is very effective in developing partnerships that contribute to the achievement of its pupils. This is evident in the sporting opportunities available to the pupils, the very positive relationship with the Local Authority, the support of the community through the chaplaincy team and the current negotiations on Academy Trust.

St Mary's is a school that exemplifies what it means to 'serve the common good'. Pupils are treated with respect, parents are rightly proud of their school and recognise the work it does to support the local community.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school, including chaplaincy provision, and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and pupil well-being</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How effectively leaders and managers promote and develop Community Cohesion</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>

## **5. THE SCHOOL'S CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT**

**2**

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is judged as good. With the recent staffing issues now resolved leaders and managers are determined that the school's future improvement will be rapid. The Governing Body welcome the challenge of supporting the Headteacher and staff in providing the best possible education for their pupils.