



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Mary's RC Primary School, Littleborough

URN: 105816

Carried out on behalf of the **Right Rev. John Arnold,, Bishop of Salford** on:

Date: 23-24 November 2022

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	2
Catholic life and mission (p.3) How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.....	2
Religious education (p.5) The quality of curriculum religious education.....	2
Collective worship (p.7) The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....	2
The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- This is a highly inclusive school which offers an outstanding level of care to vulnerable pupils and families including those with special educational needs, this being a central feature to the strong sense of family and community.
- The pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour, including their enthusiastic approach in their role as ambassadors, is a major strength of the school deserving recognition and credit.
- St Mary's provides a very positive learning environment resulting in high quality relationships between staff and pupils and the school's emphasis on being a stimulating, attractive and distinctively Catholic place to learn.
- The headteacher and her leadership team have been instrumental in forming a cohesive staff team who share a strong sense of purpose, ministry and devotion to the school.

What the school needs to improve:

- To develop more rigorous approaches by leaders and governors in the monitoring of religious education which accurately highlights areas for improvement for individual staff, using best practice in school to support this so that outcomes for the pupils improve across the school.
- To enhance the place of Catholic Social Teaching in the school through a more structured curriculum approach, so that the pupils have a deeper understanding about their role and ability to change the world as missionary disciples.
- To fully evaluate the quality of collective worship in the school to improve the provision of the opportunities provided for larger groups of pupils, specifically by focusing on the school's strengths elsewhere, through: promoting a sense of awe and wonder, silence and meditation, spontaneous prayer, and for children from ambassadorial groups to take a more prominent lead.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2

St. Mary's is a school which provides for the pupils a high level of care, which allows them to flourish as confident and happy learners. The mission statement is well-known throughout the school: the pupils refer to it regularly and it is at the heart of everything the school does. Pupils are well behaved and consider each other's views: they take on roles such as GIFT Team, Eco Warriors and School Council, with eagerness. When pupils are involved with exploring the big questions, they can listen to each other's point of view respectfully, to change their point of view, and explain why they have come to certain opinions and beliefs. They naturally refer to faith in this, and the example that Jesus gives us. Central to the school's Catholic character is the way it reaches out to welcome all families including those who are vulnerable, with SEND, or new to the area. This outstanding support is well-structured and is enhanced by the strong relationships with outside agencies and the year-round availability of the Family Support Worker. The school has an award as an 'Autism Champion'. The school environment is bright, attractive, well displayed and clean. Throughout St Mary's there is evidence of the centrality of Christ.

The staff provide positive role models in all school activities, reflecting fully the school's mission statement in action. Under the leadership of the headteacher, the staff form a cohesive team with a deep sense of ministry and purpose. The pupils recognise this fully and talk fondly of the warm learning culture and the sense of fun. 'This school is warm-hearted, comforting and safe' is the view of one pupil. Parents hold the school in very high regard, particularly the pastoral support for pupils and families and the pivotal role of the headteacher. They feel valued and acknowledge the school's open-door policy and warm welcome. 'My child has blossomed here;' was the view of one parent, and another stated, 'I've never known a school like it, it's wonderful'. The school has strong links with the parish of Pope John 23rd. The parish priest keeps close contact with the school. The pupils feel completely at home in church. Indeed one of the children has initiated a children's cleaning rota.

Governors are deeply committed to the school and approach their role with optimism. Leaders and governors work well with the diocese in promoting the vision of the bishop. They attend diocesan training regularly, to keep up to date, and are keen to ensure that the school's Catholic identity remains the most important aspect of school life.

Leaders and governors are exploring ways to improve the quality and impact of self-evaluation. They recognise the need for the governing board to play a more strategic role in the direction the school is taking, to be more informed and to hold leaders to account in a more systematic way.

A clearer and more structured approach to Catholic Social Teaching will allow the school to develop the pupils' deeper understanding of the influence that they can have locally, nationally and globally. Leaders need to ensure that the children have greater opportunity to have an impact on the world they live in as missionary disciples.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

2

Pupils at St. Mary's have a good understanding and knowledge of religious education. They are secure in using subject-specific language and express themselves confidently when discussing religious education. They are aware of the complex world around them, the big questions in everyday life and how to approach these ethically, morally and spiritually. They know the liturgical year well and they can relate to Holy Scripture with real meaning to their own lives. The children respond enthusiastically to learning opportunities which feature philosophy for children (P4C), dramatization, personal reflection and group work. Their contributions in these lessons are highly impressive with the pupils enjoying the positive outcomes of greater challenge, deeper thought and the chance to apply this to their own experiences. Occasionally, prayer and meditations are used to relax the pupils for learning. This calms them and gives them a good platform for stretching and challenging them, such as observed in a highly effective philosophy for children session and a reflection to follow the celebration of Holy Mass. The early years foundation stage provides for the children an excellent and inspiring start to their education: they are encouraged to give their views and have plenty of opportunity for talk and sharing ideas. They settle in quickly and thrive in the quality of care and the variety of experiences they have. Consequently, the children are confident and are keen to share their work, play and ideas.

Teachers have good subject knowledge in Religious Education. The school is investigating the possibility of engaging more teachers in training such as the Catholic Teachers Certificate, to improve this further. Across the school, adults are skilled in questioning the pupils, often probing them for deeper and thoughtful answers. In many lessons, the pupils were expected to work both independently and as part of a group. Pupils with SEND are catered for well, with teachers and teaching assistants giving effective support and adaptations so that all pupils are included in the lessons. The pupils are proud of their books and can talk effectively about the learning which has taken place. They enjoy lessons which are memorable, creative and fun, but state that this doesn't happen all the time. The school complements the Come and See scheme with other activities, such as the Ten:Ten resources, to give pupils a well-structured and balanced RE curriculum. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to Religious Education. Religious Education is well resourced. The school invests in the training of staff and has plans to increase this in the future.

Leaders and Governors are dedicated and determined to see continuous improvements in the quality of religious education. Too much reliance is made on the use of worksheets, some of these restrict the opportunities for pupils to fully express themselves. They limit the pupils' creative responses and their ability to draw on the skills and

knowledge they have in other areas of the curriculum. Leaders and governors have been unable to fully evaluate the full range of quality in the RE curriculum as the monitoring of teaching and learning and the standard of pupils' work has not been sufficiently rigorous. The school needs to develop systems to address any shortcomings and also to use the many examples of good practice in the school to improve the quality of children's work. However, with strong teaching and learning observed in many parts of the school, overall, the outcomes for pupils are good, they make good progress and achieve well.

Collective worship

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

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

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

2

Prayer and Liturgy play an important part of daily school life at St Mary's. Pupils are respectful, reverent and enjoy worship very much. A group of Key Stage 2 pupils unanimously gave '10 out of 10' for the experiences they have here. Pupils understand the power of prayer and they know that prayer can be collective or personal. They know that they can ask for prayers from others (including Saints) and also that they can offer their own prayers to a wide context (locally and globally). The passionate GIFT team enthusiastically leads lunchtime prayer for pupils of all ages, and these are eagerly attended. Prayer takes place in many parts of the school and also in the adjacent parish church. Pupils enjoy a variety of experiences of worship and love to sing and dance as part of this. When requested to contribute to planning and participation of liturgy, pupils are enthusiastic to make these meaningful and prayerful. They identify with the liturgical year and understand how Sacred Scripture is an essential feature of prayer and worship. During the inspection, smaller group based prayer opportunities were highly effective with pupils taking a prominent role particularly sharing their own thoughts and ideas. They enjoy times of stillness and meditation, and the use of liturgical music.

This high-quality of provision gives the foundation for enhancing prayer and liturgy in larger groups (key stage and whole school), where practice isn't as strong. Pupils can be expected to develop increased levels of spontaneity and thoughtfulness in their responses. Pupils know their set prayers well, from an early age. Their participation in Holy Mass demonstrated that the children can take part in formal prayer in a positive way which provides a spiritual dimension to such services. The school has provided training for the staff and use Ten:Ten resources to help with planning and delivery. Leaders have a good understanding of the importance of prayer and liturgy and the range and variety of experience which is possible here. Prayer takes many forms across the school. Strong connections are made with the sacramental programme, the liturgical year and local, national and global news. The school has developed the pupils' ability to sign during prayers and assemblies, a further example of the school's rich inclusive ethos. As a result, prayer and liturgy has relevance for the children and the broader school community. Some aspects of liturgy and prayer could be improved to allow greater levels of creativity, spontaneity and contributions from the children. Taking into account the confidence, eloquence and enthusiasm of pupils, a great opportunity exists here. Pupils from ambassadorial groups are keen and excited to plan and deliver liturgy and prayer, which will in turn, enhance the school's provision for Catholic Social Teaching. Parents are beginning to participate in liturgies again, and greatly appreciate the welcome they receive.

Leaders and governors need to develop more accurate systems to evaluate the quality of collective worship across the school to ensure that the very best practice is reflected in all settings. This self-evaluation needs to be regular and take into account the views and experiences of the whole school community, including pupil voice.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's RC Primary School, Littleborough
School unique reference number (URN)	105816
Full postal address of the school	Whitelees Road, Littleborough, Lancashire, OL15 8DU
School phone number	01706 378032
Name of head teacher or principal	Carmel Ruane
Chair of governing board	Anthony Cragg
School Website	https://www.smrc-lit.co.uk/
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Trustees	Click or tap here to enter text.
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	28 January 2015
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Damian Harrison	Lead inspector
Helen Sullivan	Team inspector
Mary Garvey	Team inspector
Name of inspector	Lead/team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement