



DIOCESE OF Arundel and Brighton

DENOMINATIONAL (S48) INSPECTION REPORT

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

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School Unique Reference Number: 114566

Headteacher:	Mrs M. Cowler
Chair of Governors:	Mrs C. McCarthy
Lead Inspector:	Mrs A. Oddy
Associate Inspector:	Mr R. McKenzie
Inspection date:	1 st December 2015

Overall Effectiveness	Previous Inspection: 2
	This inspection: 2

Catholic Life:	1
Collective Worship:	1
Religious Education:	2

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Mary's is a good Catholic school because:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is a welcoming and inclusive community in which all are valued. The school's clear Catholic identity is evident in the many attractive displays related to religious education and the school's Catholic life. The school has a strong Catholic ethos which is reflected in the excellent relationships between staff and pupils. ▪ The school's mission statement is at the heart of school life. It informs all policies and practice and is known to staff and pupils. Pupils appreciate its importance to school life and their daily lives. ▪ Pupils feel safe and happy and enjoy coming to school. They are proud of their school and are happy to serve their school community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High quality collective worship is central to school life. The school community comes together to celebrate the Church's feasts and seasons as well as a regular programme of school assemblies and liturgies. ▪ Pupils enjoy being involved in planning, preparing and leading prayer and worship. They are confident in contributing to spontaneous prayer and in writing their own prayers to be used in class or at school celebrations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The school has a strong and vibrant Catholic life which embraces all members of its community. Pastoral care and the wellbeing of each individual is a high priority. The school is committed to nurturing the spiritual development of all pupils. It respects the beliefs of members of the school community from other faith backgrounds, but ensures they are welcome in everything the school does. ▪ Governors, leaders and staff show passion and dedication to ensuring high standards for all pupils and to communicating their shared vision for the school. ▪ The school maintains good links with the diocese and with other local Catholic schools. Links with its local parish are excellent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons. They make good progress and achieve well, with many achieving better than age related expectations during their time at the school. ▪ The learning environment is attractive and well-resourced to enhance pupils' learning. ▪ Pupils show excellent behaviour for learning. Work in books is beautifully presented and reflects the care taken by pupils. ▪ Recommendations regarding assessment made by the last inspection have been addressed. ▪ As monitoring and evaluation become more established and embedded, the school has very good capacity to improve further.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided school. It is situated in the Mayfield Deanery of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. The school is maintained by East Sussex Local Authority.
- The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 200.
- 45% of pupils are baptised Catholics. The principal parish which the school serves is St Mary's, Crowborough.
- 17% of pupils are classified as having a special educational need or disability. This is lower than the national average.
- 17% of pupils are in receipt of pupil premium funding. This is below the national average.
- 73% of pupils are of White British heritage. 7% of pupils are from Other White backgrounds. The rest of the pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- 10% of pupils speak English as an additional language. This is lower than the national average.
- The school has had a number of changes to the governing body, including the Chair, but is now stable and most vacancies on the governing body have been filled.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Develop and implement a structured programme of monitoring and evaluation of the school's Catholic life and Religious Education and use this to inform school development planning.
- Continue to raise standards in the teaching and learning of Religious Education, working towards outstanding practice in all areas.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers 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.

- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.
- The mission statement is at the heart of school life and informs all policies and practice.
- Pupils are at the centre of shaping the mission statement and contributing to the ethos of the school. They are familiar with the mission statement and can explain how it impacts on school life. The school council and older pupils discuss and evaluate the school's mission and suggest improvements to form part of school development planning.
- Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy belonging to their 'school family'. They are caring and considerate towards each other. They know it is important to be inclusive and forgiving and appreciate being part of the caring community that is St Mary's school. They feel safe in school and know that any worries they may have will be swiftly attended to. Pupils said "We make sure every child is welcome and fits in with everyone." New children are supported, "If someone is lonely in the playground we would give up time to play with them."
- Pupils are aware of the needs of others and of their responsibility towards them. They are active in supporting a range of charitable activities and participate in numerous activities such as Disability Awareness Day, Remembrance Day and discussions of children's rights.
- Pupils are encouraged to consider themselves part of the wider community. They participate in diocesan events and celebrations, such as the Good Shepherd Mass and in local community events, including those involving other churches. All pupils, regardless of their faith background, are included and many spoke appreciatively of their enjoyment of these events.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to take responsibility. They are conscientious in fulfilling these duties, seeing them as an opportunity to be of service to others and their school. They are able to relate this to their sense of vocation. Play leaders and buddies fulfil useful playground roles and befriend younger pupils, helping them to feel secure.
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school was excellent throughout this inspection. In lessons, behaviour for learning was exemplary. Good classroom management ensured that all pupils complied with the school's high expectations.

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

- All members of the school community appreciate the importance of the mission statement to the life of their school. Recent re-evaluation of the statement took place in September 2015, with staff, children, parents and parishioners invited to contribute. The underlying principles “Pray, Learn, Love, Enjoy” are explicit in all areas of school life and clearly displayed around the school.
- Staff form a cohesive team, committed to supporting each other and providing guidance and support for the pupils in their care.
- Pastoral care for pupils is excellent. Social skills groups and nurture groups are provided for pupils and the school works with a number of outside agencies to support pupils as appropriate.
- Pastoral care also extends to pupils’ families and to staff, illustrating the school’s care for the wellbeing of all members of its community.
- High quality displays related to Religious Education and the liturgical year proclaim the school’s Catholic identity. Attractive, well kept prayer focus areas are a feature of every classroom. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to these, making these areas personal and meaningful.
- Education in Personal Relationships is well established in the school and is in line with the teachings of the Church. Pupils are encouraged to explore and discuss moral and ethical issues and the importance of these in our world.
- A range of prayer and worship opportunities are central to the school’s Catholic life and to the school as a worshipping community.
- The parish priest is a frequent and welcome visitor to the school, enriching the school’s Catholic life. He provides pastoral care for staff, pupils and families and in particular to families at times of need, regardless of their faith backgrounds. He provides an excellent link with the parish, ensuring continuity of the home / school / parish relationship.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school.

- Leaders and managers are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education and to ensuring that the Catholic life of the school nurtures the academic, spiritual and moral development of its pupils.
- Senior leaders and governors promote the Catholic ethos at all times, using the school's mission "Pray, Learn, Love, Enjoy" to illustrate the school's values and Catholic identity.
- The school actively fosters its links with the parish. An example of this is after school lessons provided for all enrolled on the parish First Holy Communion programme. In addition, a member of the Governing Body serves as a parish link, representative of the school Governing Body and the Parish Pastoral Team.
- Deanery and diocesan links show an awareness of the school as part of the wider Catholic community. The headteacher represents the deanery on the Primary Steering Committee.
- Parents are appreciative of the Catholic life of the school. One wrote, "There is a strong Catholic ethos throughout all areas of the school" and another said, "In my experience as a parent, St Mary's is doing really well".
- The views of pupils are actively sought and listened to. Governors were happy to support pupils' request for a prayer garden as part of school development of the Catholic ethos, providing an area for quiet contemplation.
- Governors are frequent visitors to the school and participants in celebrations and services. These visits are largely informal. Events also feature in the newsletter and on the website.
- Although much informal monitoring of the school's Catholic life is taking place, the school would now benefit from putting in place a structured programme of monitoring, which together with the evaluation of impact, would inform school improvement planning. It is also recommended that Catholic life and Religious Education should be a standard agenda item at Governing Body meetings to assist governors in their monitoring and evaluation role.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AND PRAYER LIFE

- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

- A well planned programme of collective worship ensures a variety of opportunities to inspire and engage pupils. Daily assemblies provide a different focus each day, for example the Monday assembly is based on the Gospel reading for the previous Sunday. The weekly classroom assembly offers pupils the opportunity to plan and hold their own assembly on a relevant topic, choosing scripture readings and prayers appropriate to the theme.
- Pupils are encouraged to be actively involved in planning and preparing liturgies and celebrations as well as being active and responsive participants. They enjoy the responsibility involved and are happy to be part of school worship in this way. They are confident in leading prayer and contributing to spontaneous prayers. Pupils are creative in their approach, using a range of music and prayer styles to enhance worship. Their suggestions regarding seating arrangements and use of contemporary music have been listened to and implemented.
- Pupils use the traditional prayers of the Church and are at ease with composing and using their own prayers. They have a good understanding of the Church's feasts and seasons.
- Pupils know that they are all part of a worshipping community and respond well to coming together for this purpose. In the act of collective worship observed, pupils were active participants. They sang and signed the hymns joyfully and with enthusiasm.
- Pupils of all faiths or none are very much part of the school's collective worship, at which all are valued and welcome. Mindful of the diversity of belief of its members, this inclusive community illustrates its commitment to tolerance and respect within the framework of Christian worship. This results in a happy and harmonious community for whom prayer and worship are a central part of school life. A parent wrote, 'I wasn't born in England and I just know how to pray in my own language. My daughter is teaching me the "English way" so we can pray in both languages. I couldn't be happier'.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

- Worship and prayer are at the heart of the school and central to all school celebration. Prayer is an integral part of the school day. Classroom and assembly prayers offer pupils the opportunity to talk to God, to reflect and to pray for others. Pupils welcome these opportunities and value these quiet moments which form part of their spiritual development. Pupils also value their outside prayer garden. One said, "I like using it for silent prayer in my head."
- Staff prayer is part of school meetings and school INSET. Staff meet annually with other local Catholic schools to share a day of reflection, contemplation and training.
- A structured programme of masses and liturgies is planned for each term, ensuring sufficient time for preparation of high quality celebrations and liturgies. These reflect the Church's feasts and seasons, fostering awareness of the traditions of the Church.
- Staff are skilled in helping pupils to plan and deliver worship opportunities. Support for new staff ensures that staff team confidence is high.
- Members of the parish, parents and the wider community are often invited to join the school community and speak appreciatively of these occasions.
- The Advent assembly was of high quality. It was scripturally based, and used pupil drama and own prayers to advantage. It offered all pupils an opportunity to carry the message of the assembly into their own lives. By acting as Advent Angels they could carry out an act of service to others. The theme of forgiveness was linked with the opportunity for pupils to participate in Reconciliation and add a ribbon to a frame to show being sorry as part of their preparation for Christmas. The parish priest was available for Reconciliation for all pupils who wished to participate.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

- The headteacher and Religious Education subject leaders are skilled in planning and delivering high quality collective worship opportunities. They are passionate in their commitment to making these meaningful and spiritual experiences for all staff and pupils, including those from other faith backgrounds. They are models of good practice.
- They appreciate the need to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills of staff as appropriate, sharing training, information, guidance and support. The 'no question is silly' approach encourages staff to ask questions or seek advice, knowing they will have their queries dealt with sensitively and promptly.
- Assemblies are monitored and feedback given to teachers. This feedback is largely informal, with newly qualified teachers given more formal feedback. The school should now develop a more structured approach to the monitoring of collective worship and prayer life as part of monitoring and evaluating the Catholic life of the school. This should also be reported to governors on a regular basis and should inform school development planning.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well, with the great majority achieving or exceeding age related expectations. A significant number of pupils achieve the higher levels by the end of Key Stage 2. This is consistent over the last three years.
- All groups of pupils, including those of other faiths or with no faith commitment, achieve well. It is commendable that the school unites all pupils in the perception that Religious Education is an important and special part of the curriculum and inspires them to give of their best.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to do well. They are able to relate their Religious Education lessons to their own lives. They are active learners, developing questioning and research skills.
- Work in pupils' books shows good subject coverage and a range of tasks and ways of recording their work. Standards of presentation are high, reflecting the care with which pupils approach and carry out their written work. Differentiation is largely by outcome, although there is some evidence of differentiated tasks.
- Pupils appreciate that Religious Education is a special time. Use of candles, music and class prayer focus areas encourage meditation and reflection as part of the lesson and pupils respond well to this. Behaviour in lessons is excellent and pupils are clearly interested and motivated.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

- The school uses the 'Come and See' programme of Religious Education. Curriculum time allocation is in line with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- Four lessons, across three key stages, were observed as part of this inspection. All were good with some demonstrating outstanding features. All were scripture based and included prayer and reflection, in some cases child led, as part of the lesson. Technology and resources were used to advantage. Pupils with special needs were supported appropriately and sensitively. In some lessons, a clearer focus on the lesson objective and closer attention to pace would have improved teaching and learning. It is recommended that these aspects form part of a focused approach to school monitoring and evaluation.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use a variety of teaching styles and strategies to interest and engage pupils.
- Marking in pupils' books is regular and affirmative. There is some evidence of questions which encourage pupils to think more deeply about their learning and 'next steps' suggestion to indicate how they could progress further.
- Assessment is part of teaching and learning at all levels. Formal assessments are recorded three times a year and pupils' progress tracked throughout the school. This has now been entered on the school's electronic system, facilitating transition and teacher discussion. Moderation takes place within school and at deanery level. A portfolio of levelled work provides evidence of work samples and school assessments. Assessment recommendations made by the last inspection have been fully addressed.
- Planning is thorough, detailed and takes into account the differing needs of the pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are supported. All groups of pupils receive appropriate levels of challenge, reflecting the school's high expectations in Religious Education.
- Teachers new to Catholic education and newly qualified teachers receive school and diocesan training as well as guidance and support from the subject leaders and the headteacher.

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

- School leaders and managers are committed to provision of high quality religious education. The religious education leaders are dedicated to their role and are ably supported by the headteacher. They show knowledge and understanding of their key role and work well together to provide support and guidance to the staff team.
- The headteacher and subject leaders attend regular diocesan training to raise teaching and learning standards and up to date knowledge. Information from training is passed on to other staff at staff meetings. Staff are encouraged to share resources and good practice, leading to a supportive professional atmosphere. One of the religious education leaders is sharing her good practice and expertise by assisting with the diocesan programme of training and mentoring NQTs.
- Monitoring includes lesson observations, planning and book scrutiny. Individual feedback provides information for individuals to use to improve their performance and results also feed into school self evaluation.
- Curriculum planning includes the use of cross-curricular links and the inclusion of relevant questions and happenings in the world today, ensuring that pupils do not see religious education as a subject in isolation.
- The religious education governor regularly visits the school and has discussions with the subject leaders regarding provision and progress in religious education.
- Education in Personal Relationships is well established in the school. Leaders are aware of the varying backgrounds of the pupils and the need to take this into account, whilst ensuring that teaching is always in accordance with that of the Catholic Church.
- The teaching of other faiths takes place as part of the planned programme of religious education and is enriched by high quality resources and a cross-curricular approach.
- Parents are informed of the religious education topics and events on the school website and newsletters. Despite this, a significant number of parental questionnaires indicated concerns regarding communication of what is being taught and pupils' progress in religious education and the school will need to address this.
- The school should now continue to work on raising standards in the teaching and learning of religious education, working towards achieving outstanding practice. This could include the sharing of good practice and more closely focused monitoring as part of a planned and structured comprehensive programme of monitoring and evaluation which informs school development planning.

Summary of Inspection Judgements

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

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Catholic Life

1

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

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

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

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Collective Worship and Prayer Life

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

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The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

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How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life.

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Religious Education

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

1

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

2

How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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