

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 111340

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Shrewsbury

03–04 April 2025

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

#### 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

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

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1	
Yes	
Yes	
N/A	

## Compliance statement

- Ten percent of teaching time is dedicated to religious education. *The Way, The Truth, and The Life* is taught in Early Years, Year 5, and Year 6. *The Vine and The Branches* is taught in Years 1 to 4.
- The school is using *Life to the Full* resources to teach relationships and sex education. Leaders ensure this is done through a Catholic lens.
- There were no areas for improvement from the previous inspection.

## What the school does well

- St Mary's pupils, staff and governors have warm, high-quality relationships with all members of a school community where pupils are seen as individuals and leave the school knowing they are loved by God.
- Pastoral care of pupils is exceptional; pupils are not only taught the faith they also live it in their daily lives.
- Teachers' skilful questioning maximises the learning of all pupils and ensures that pupils are eloquent in explaining what they have learnt in religious education.
- The physical gestures to retrieve and build on previous learning in religious education, in which pupils actively participate, produce highly effective recall from pupils.
- The beautifully presented use of space for prayer opportunities around school are central, creative, and well thought out. Pupils at St Mary's are very proud and respectful of their chapel, appreciating how this supports their prayer life at school.

## What the school needs to improve

- To reflect and review the school's mission statement to ensure it is clear and inspiring, known to all, and lived throughout the school community.
- To make sure that all pupils know and can clearly articulate what they need to do to take the next steps in their religious education learning.
- To create a clear and comprehensive strategy of progression in prayer and liturgy to build up skills and evaluation in each year group as the children move through the school.

## 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

#### Pupil outcomes

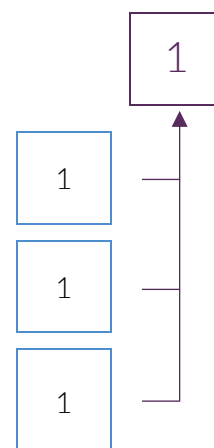
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### Provision

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

#### Leadership

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



Pupils contribute greatly to the Catholic life and mission of this school. They are proud of, and dedicated to, Mary, their school patron. They are happy, confident, and secure as unique persons loved by God. Each class reviews the mission statement annually. Pupils clearly articulate their understanding of being called to follow Jesus. They explain, 'We care for each other, make everyone feel welcome...we don't leave anyone out'. Living out the gospel message through active participation in groups such as Mini Vinnies, Faith in Action and the School Council demonstrates pupils are enthusiastic in their response to Catholic social teaching. They relish opportunities to serve those in need and to care for our common home. A staff member comments, 'It's a living faith, the children really live their faith'. Pupils often initiate fund-raising efforts to support local, national, and global causes. For example, raising £100 for a local hospice by selling loom band bracelets and books during Lent. Pupils say, 'You can choose your own, sometimes we choose 'Mary's meals', sometimes we do litter picking to help the environment'. Pupils' behaviour is exceptional; they treat each other, staff, and visitors with respect. They say that they enjoy 'taking charge' in liturgies and 'supporting other pupils'.

The mission statement is lived and witnessed to throughout the school. The whole school knows, practises, and promotes the Bee-attitudes, as guides to living out the word of God. Staff are deeply committed to supporting and developing the ethos of the school. They say, 'That is what we do, we develop each individual. We do not just teach the faith; we live the faith.'. There is a real sense of community and welcome for all in this school, with excellent relationships at all levels. One parent comments, 'Catholic values are the very fabric of this school. It's not just in teaching but in the relationships between staff and pupils and pupils and their peers.' Pastoral care is excellent. Staff say, 'Second to none is the love and nurture; we do it through our actions,

not our words'. Well-planned and resourced programmes and strategies support and nurture pupils, particularly the most vulnerable. Explicit signs, displays and creative spaces throughout the school reflect its Catholic mission. The chapel is a calm and uplifting space for all. Staff support pupils and each other in planning frequent high-quality opportunities for spiritual and moral development. Provision for relationships, sex and health education is fully compliant with diocesan requirements.

Leaders and governors are passionate in upholding and promoting the vision of a strong school community, founded on their Catholic faith. One governor said, 'Our faith embodies everything.' Leaders, governors, and staff actively participate in diocesan training and formation. There is a strong partnership with the local Church, evident in the commitment to parish-led programmes and in the commitment of the clergy, parishioners and parents to school Masses, liturgies, and events. Parents say they appreciate such opportunities. Leaders and governors are inspirational witnesses to the gospel and to Catholic social teaching, ceaseless in their support of those most in need. For instance, they resource pastoral and additional support for pupils and their families. They ensure that the rights and well-being of all employed at the school are respected. Staff said they appreciated governors' willingness to meet and to listen to their concerns about changes in the school. Staff new to the school feel well supported in contributing to the school's Catholic life and mission. Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation of the school is accurate and often leads to effective and planned improvements. For instance, consulting pupil voice leads to the provision of enrichment activities and resources such as visits to Savio House.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

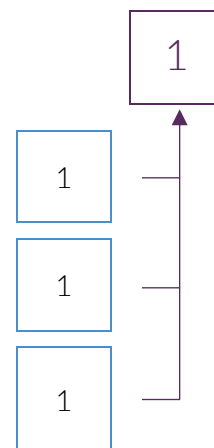
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### Provision

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

#### Leadership

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



Pupils' demonstrate highly developed knowledge, understanding and skills. The learning required by the *Religious Education Directory* is evident in lessons and in discussion. From a lower-than-average starting point, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, make good progress throughout the school. Underpinned by strategies they learn to help them know, do, and remember more, pupils achieve consistently good and better outcomes. They are religiously literate, and eloquent when reflecting on their learning in religious education. For instance, pupils explain that they respect others, pray for them, and support agencies that care for the vulnerable as a response to Jesus' compassion and understanding. As they progress through the school, pupils demonstrate increasing independence and confidence. They engage fully in tasks, responding in creative ways such as role play, and art. Pupils recall using artwork as their personal response to the parable of the mustard seed, and its relevance in their lives. They are articulate and ask searching questions of adults. Pupils concentrate extremely well, producing good and high-quality work. Their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils understand the detailed feedback they receive but some later find it difficult to recall what they need to do to improve. Pupil attainment is good.

Across the school, teachers' subject knowledge is at least good and some is excellent. They demonstrate deep commitment, deliver lessons confidently and have high expectations of pupils. Teachers know their pupils very well, and plan effectively. Highly effective retrieval strategies ensure all pupils learn extremely well. Teachers' skilful questioning supports and extends pupils' understanding. In response to pupils' work, feedback slides help pupils to understand where they are in their learning and what they need to do to progress further. Exemplary relationships and the celebration of pupils' efforts is intrinsic in this school. Staff fully understand the impact the teaching of religious education has on the spiritual and moral

development of their pupils. For example, in many religious education lessons, the learning is linked to spiritual, moral, social, and cultural aspects of pupils' lives. The whole school curriculum is mapped to include relevant links to religious education. High quality resources, including other adults, support and enhance pupils' learning. These are carefully planned and used in creative ways so that the needs of all pupils are met. The use of the resource Picture news, with references to Catholic social teaching and scripture, effectively supports and enhances the delivery of current topics.

The religious education curriculum faithfully expresses the learning required in the *Religious Education Directory*. Leaders and governors view religious education as a core subject. The religious education lead's outstanding vision is evident in leaders' and governors' strategic commitment of time, effective support, and high-quality training and resources. This vision drives imaginative and creative teaching. For instance, highly effective practices underpin pupils' learning, increase their knowledge and skills, and enables them to express their thoughts eloquently. Professional development is a strength of this school, with both attendance at diocesan courses and regular in-house and cluster training. Teaching throughout the school is good and some is outstanding. As they progress through the school, learners meet a well-planned curriculum that teaches them more and demands more of them. This means that the needs of all groups of pupils are met. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Regular monitoring and evaluation of religious education is strengthened by moderation with other Catholic schools. Leaders and governors encourage and support strong links with parish groups and individuals, as well as with other local schools and with other agencies. This is evident in the wide-ranging enrichment activities provided for all groups of pupils.

## Collective worship

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

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

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

1

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

#### Leadership

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

1

1

Pupils sing beautifully, listen attentively, and pray quietly during periods of reflection, engaging well in the experiences of prayer and liturgy offered to them. They are keen to talk about the times of the day they pray and share their enthusiasm for when this takes place outside. By the end of Key Stage Two, pupils demonstrate secure understanding of a variety of ways of praying. They understand the shape of the liturgical year and how this is reflected in the prayer life of the school. For example, celebrating a Marian procession in May, Stations of the Cross in Lent, and Lenten and Advent prayer trails. Faith in Action and Mini Vinnie members support prayer leaders and deliver relevant weekly scripture passages and 'saints of the week' cards to all classes. Pupils understand the importance of collaborating with their teachers and with each other to plan and deliver creative and meaningful prayer and liturgy. They support others with confidence, demonstrating their understanding of the skills needed to deliver engaging and prayerful experiences. By their calm approach, pupils show respect for those who sometimes struggle to concentrate or understand. Pupils' skills in evaluating the quality of prayer and liturgy should now be developed further.

At numerous times during the day, the prayer life at St Mary's school reflects the rhythm of the prayer life of the Church. Prayer and liturgy are embedded in the many significant events across the school year. For instance, Mass each week in the chapel, the Marian procession, the poppy trail, and the Holy Week services ensure wide and enriched opportunities for prayer. Scripture is central to the prayer life of the school. Passages of scripture reflect the liturgical season and are explored to link to the pupils' lives. Inspiring artwork, music, focal points, and imaginative and creative use of space around the school enhance the different forms of prayer and liturgy experienced by all at St Mary's. The chapel is cherished as a sacred space which is entered with reverence and respected by all. The school seeks to work well with the parish, inviting

parishioners and parents into Mass each Thursday. Parishioners are invited into school to share their gifts and experiences with pupils. Local and national events are marked in collaboration with other faith groups in the area. For instance, the school is a significant contributor to the annual Remembrance service and the Boat and Folk festival.

Leaders and governors place high emphasis on the importance of the Mass, reflected in the careful planning of weekly celebrations of Mass, as well as in pupil-led celebrations of the word. Staff feel very well supported by the headteacher, who is the religious education lead, and by the assistant headteacher, in developing their understanding and skills of leading and supporting pupils to lead prayer and liturgy. They also praise the diocesan training. There is a clear and accessible prayer and liturgy policy. Resourcing of prayer and liturgy is given a high priority. This is seen through the prayer tables in the classrooms, the quality of displays in communal areas around the school, resources available for pupils' use in the school chapel, and the strong commitment to professional development and formation. Outdoor provision for prayer such as Mary's grotto and the Peace Garden are well used by staff and pupils. In discussions with governors, they emphasise that, through self-evaluation and pupil voice, they know that 'St Mary's pupils are happy', and 'see the joy of knowing Christ'. As one governor states, 'They may not know Christ when they come to this school, but they do leave knowing Him.'



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	111340
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8953537
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Manor Lane, Middlewich, CW10 9DH
School phone number	01606516171
Headteacher	Janet McKinlay
Chair of governors	Simon Davis
School Website	<a href="http://www.stmarysmiddlewich.cheshire.sch.uk/">http://www.stmarysmiddlewich.cheshire.sch.uk/</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	21 March 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	1

## The inspection team

Carol Morgan  
Emily Cahill

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