



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Mary And St Michael Catholic Primary School

URN: 131936

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster on:

Date: 2-3 February 2023

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The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- The school provides an inclusive and supportive environment for its most vulnerable pupils.
- Induction and support for new staff.
- Pupils are religiously literate and confident in sharing their knowledge and understanding in religious education.
- There is a flourishing partnership between school and parish which fosters wonderful opportunities for the celebration of prayer and liturgy in the community.
- The celebration of the charism of the founders of the school enabling pupils to appreciate the school's history and legacy.

What the school needs to improve:

- Develop pupil and staff knowledge and understanding of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.
- Ensure that teachers are offered continued professional development opportunities to promote high quality teaching, learning and assessment in religious education.
- Regularly review the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy as part of the school's cycle of self-evaluation and planned improvements.

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

All school community members embrace their mission, 'Learning together hand in hand with our friend Jesus'. Pupils are happy and confident, and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is consistently good. They demonstrate a sense of respect for each other and gladly accept their personal responsibility to follow the teachings and example of Jesus to help others. Pupils actively participate in opportunities to care for the earth and serve those in need in their roles as Eco-Warriors and Faith Friends. The Faith Friends of the school are able to talk about helping others in a variety of ways through supporting charities such as The Catholic Children's Society, Cafod, Providence Row and the London Air Ambulance. Pupils are eager to apply to positions of responsibility and can speak about how they are currently carrying on the work of their founder, Sr Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy. Pupils show a good understanding of the importance, in building a Catholic community, of the core values of the school: respect, compassion, collaboration, perseverance and self-worth. However, they now need to know and understand how the principles of Catholic Social Teaching inform their actions as Christians.

There is a strong culture of welcome, which is evident in all relationships and includes valuing and supporting those from various cultures and traditions. Staff are proud of their school community and speak highly of leaders who have created a caring culture for all. One staff member stated, 'There is a lovely sense of community in the school and this is rooted in our Catholic faith and support towards one another as members of God's family.' Pupils and staff of other faiths are given frequent opportunities to share their beliefs. All staff are deeply committed to the care of the most vulnerable pupils as part of their belief in valuing the individual and acknowledging Christ's presence in all. This results in a fully inclusive environment where all are nurtured. Pupils with complex needs are given

regular opportunities to engage in all aspects of school life and are well-supported by additional adults. The programme for relationships, sex and health education helps to consolidate the school's vision for human flourishing. In class assemblies, staff were observed to participate in prayer, and in singing and signing the hymns, offering joyful witness to the Catholic mission of the school.

The head teacher, senior leaders and governors are highly ambitious for the school and ensure that all policies and procedures reflect the Catholic identity and mission. The school's improvement plan includes a section on developing the Catholic life and mission. Leaders ensure that resources are used effectively to help those in greatest need in the community. As part of their commitment, leaders and governors encourage a close partnership with the parish. The link governor, is committed, well-organised, and conscientious in his work to support the school. Good links exist with the diocese through attendance at deanery meetings, training and moderation sessions. During the Covid lockdown period, the headteacher organised a Year 6 leavers' Mass which was recorded and made available to all schools in the diocese. Parents are invited to school Masses and liturgies and are kept well-informed through newsletters, visits and daily communication. Leaders plan together to ensure that connections are made between the religious education curriculum and learning in other subjects, such as geography and music, to emphasise caring for our common home. New staff are given the religious education handbook and the diocesan welcome pack as an introduction to working in a Catholic setting. All staff are supported through regular professional development and supportive pastoral care. One staff member stated that 'teachers are supported well to give children an enriched Catholic education.'

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 show good levels of religious literacy, readily demonstrating their knowledge of key concepts using subject-specific vocabulary. They are fluent and confident in speaking about their learning and this helps to develop secure knowledge and understanding in the subject. They are able to draw upon prior learning to aid their understanding of new concepts. Pupils are able to work both collaboratively with their peers, and independently to achieve success. This is helped by good scaffolding and modelling by teachers and the provision of a variety of creative tasks. Pupils concentrate well with good engagement. They enjoy their learning and produce work which is well-presented. Pupils regularly respond to teachers' feedback which they use to consolidate and improve their learning. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils achieve well when compared with their learning in other core subjects. Pupils use the Bible confidently during lessons. Those with additional needs are supported exceptionally well, with careful planning, differentiated tasks and effective adult support. Pupils would benefit from earlier opportunities in lessons to respond to challenge and to take the initiative in their learning. In the best lessons, teachers use the 'I wonder' questions to deepen learning and to encourage reflection and theological thinking. This now needs to be offered more regularly so that pupils can think spiritually and ethically and relate their learning more readily to their own lives.

Teachers are committed to the value of religious education and they plan well to meet the needs of pupils. Additional adults are used effectively to support identified pupils and groups of pupils during lessons. Teachers use prayer, scripture, art, music, technology, and a range of resources to enhance learning experiences. Godly play resources are used for younger pupils to good effect to help them towards a better understanding of scripture passages. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, which is supported by continuous professional development, in particular the Foundation

Stones diocesan training and the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies. In addition, the religious education subject leader supports teachers' understanding in collaborative planning sessions. In the best lessons, teachers use questions skillfully, adapting tasks to lead pupils to a better understanding of their faith. For example, the 'wondering' question, 'I wonder what Jesus felt when only one leper came back to say thank you?' brought pupils to the realisation that we all need to be thankful to God for blessings received. Opportunities for challenge are available to pupils during the lessons; however, pupils are not always given the space and time to explore their learning in greater depth. Pupils' achievements are celebrated in joyful weekly assemblies.

Leaders and governors ensure that religious education enjoys a parity with other subjects and is acknowledged as the foundation of all learning in the school. Leaders work hard to ensure that religious education provision is imaginatively and thoughtfully planned. Pupils are able to express their learning in a variety of ways, including poems, songs, prayers, diary entries, acting and debates. The budget allocation for religious education is given priority, ensuring that resources are available to support and enhance learning. Prayer focus areas are available in each classroom with attractive displays which support pupils' learning with key vocabulary and topic questions. Homework is set half-termly in religious education. Leaders support teachers in providing ongoing development opportunities. The RE subject leader gives generously of her time to coach and mentor staff to support planning and delivery of the scheme of work. The subject leader regularly monitors teaching and learning and gives effective feedback to teachers. The head teacher, senior leaders and subject leader work effectively together to improve teaching and learning in the subject, resulting in teaching that is consistently good. Leaders and governors share a strategic vision for religious education, using the outcomes of self-evaluation to set clear improvement targets for the subject.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship 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



Pupils participate fully in prayer and liturgy, consciously responding to messages shared and relating them to their own lives. They can reflect in silence, join in prayer with confidence, and sing hymns joyfully and enthusiastically. Pupils show reverence and respect during prayer times. They understand that there are a variety of ways to pray as part of the Catholic tradition and have been introduced to the Rosary, Examen, and the Angelus. The Faith Friends spoke proudly about supporting younger pupils in Year 3 in praying the Angelus daily. Pupils regularly lead and evaluate classroom worship. Displays and prayer areas support pupils' understanding of the liturgical year and they use this knowledge when preparing their own acts of worship. Class collective worship books celebrate their efforts in planning and evaluating class worship. Pupils are supported in thinking about 'mission' by being given a mission task on Monday at the Gospel assembly and reflecting on their mission on Friday. For example, during assembly, pupils reflected on how they followed the week's mission: 'Try to be peaceful and be good friends with everyone,' based on the Beatitude, 'Blessed be the peacemakers'. They spoke about how they had remembered to 'show kindness' and 'made sure that everyone had a chance to play'. Pupils are given the opportunity to write their own prayers in class prayer books. One Year 6 pupil wrote, 'Please continue to guide us to the gates of heaven with peace and harmony.'

Prayer is central to the daily life of the school. Traditional prayers are displayed in classes so that pupils can pray as part of the routine of the day. The school has a prayer progression policy which ensures that prayers are taught appropriate to pupils' ages. Pupils' awareness of the liturgical seasons is incorporated into the colours and artefacts used in attractive prayer focus areas within classrooms and in corridors. An outdoor willow structure is frequently used as a prayer space for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is a naturally embedded pattern of prayer in the

school so that pupils can experience the breadth and richness of Catholic tradition. Pupil-led acts of worship focus on a chosen scripture passage in order to deepen pupils' experience of prayer. Staff who attend liturgies and Masses ensure that they are active participants and positive role models for the pupils. One Year 6 pupil described Jesus' presence in the tabernacle at church. He said that, not only was Jesus visible to him, but that he could 'feel His warm embrace'. The school's strong partnership with the local parish enables many opportunities to celebrate Mass throughout the year, in particular, for holydays and feast days. Parents are regularly invited to participate in the prayer life of the school. Photos of Masses and liturgies in pupils' religious education class books comprise a wonderful record of the school's vibrant prayer life. One member of staff commented 'Children are encouraged to develop understanding of their faith through their relationship with Jesus.'

Leaders support staff in leading appropriate prayer and worship in the school. Diocesan resources, such as the welcome handbook and Mass guidelines, as well as the school's own policy on prayer and worship, are shared with staff to support provision. Early career teachers attend diocesan training on facilitating acts of worship and class prayer and liturgies. Leaders are highly effective at modelling, to less experienced teachers, how to plan and lead prayer and liturgy in the school. As a result, all staff have a good understanding of the importance of prayer and liturgy and are well-supported in leading prayer and liturgy sessions and in guiding pupils to be confident prayer leaders. The parish priest and subject leader in religious education prepare an annual calendar to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist for feast days and other significant events, such as the beginning of the school year and the leavers' Mass. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered to pupils during the seasons of Lent and Advent. Leaders now need to regularly review the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy as part of the school's cycle of self-evaluation and planned improvements.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary and St Michael Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	131936
Full postal address of the school	Sutton Street, Stepney, London E1 0BD
School phone number	0207 790 4986
Name of head teacher or principal	Rachel Mahon
Chair of governing board	Mike Killington
School Website	https://st-marymichael.towerhamlets.sch.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	N/A
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	March 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Norah Flatley	Lead inspector
Mary Ainger	Team inspector
Tracey Peters	Team inspector

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