

Catholic Diocese of Northampton



**INSPECTION REPORT OF DENOMINATIONAL
CHARACTER AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

ST MARY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
Woodside Way, Northampton, NN5 7HX

DfES School No: 928/3400
URN 122036

Acting Head Teacher: Mrs L McGarrity
Chair of Governors: Mr H Williams

Reporting inspector: Mrs R Jones
Associate inspector: Mrs K Williams

Date of inspection: 26 June 2012

Date report issued: 10 July 2012

Date of previous inspection: July 2008

The School is in the Trusteeship of the Diocese and
in partnership with Northamptonshire Local Authority

Information about the school

St Mary's is a smaller than average primary school with 168 pupils on roll of whom 29% are Catholic. Half of the teaching staff and a small proportion of the support staff are Catholics. The majority of the children are white British. However the number of children with English as an additional language is steadily rising. Just over a third of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school catchment draws from an area of high social deprivation.

Key grades for inspection

1 Outstanding 2 Good 3 Satisfactory 4 Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 2

St Mary's is a good Catholic school whose strong Catholic identity is evident throughout the community and in its daily life. The acting headteacher is totally committed to ensuring the Catholicity of the school impacts greatly on the spiritual and moral development of the children. Relationships in the school are excellent reflecting the gospel values of love and forgiveness for one another. Pupils love their school, describing it as a "great school where all the teachers really care about us and we care about each other". Prayer is a strong feature of school life. Religious Education [RE] has a high profile in the school reflected in the many beautiful religious displays around the building. Pupils make good progress in knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 2

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Development issues from the last inspection were related to assessment, developing home school partnerships and monitoring all aspects of Catholic life of the school.

A system for assessment has now been established. Further work to embed these procedures is now needed. Staff have undertaken training on assessment with Diocesan advisors. Targets for children in RE are also to be introduced although marking currently indicates the next steps in learning for pupils.

An annual action plan for RE has been established, clearly setting priorities for all aspects of the religious life of the school and to raise standards further. Monitoring procedures including lesson observations, book scrutinies and overseeing of planning have impacted on the quality of teaching and learning. A new planning format has been introduced to ensure continuity and progression. The SLT are now better placed to effectively evaluate the RE provision and have successfully improved standards in RE.

The school SEF provides an accurate view of the school at this point in time. The SLT and governors are strongly committed to the Catholic ethos of the school and actively promote prayer and worship. However, governors involvement in the development and monitoring of RE are currently ineffective. A new headteacher has been appointed for September 2012. In-house training for improving teacher subject knowledge is already underway. Home school parish links are developing and a deacon from the local parish is now able to support this. A parents' forum has also been established. This remains a priority for the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to embed assessment procedures in RE
- Governors take a more strategic role in monitoring and evaluating provision
- Continue to develop teachers subject knowledge in RE
- Ensure pace and challenge is consistent in all lessons to raise standards further

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 2

Children know and understand the mission statement which is displayed in all areas of the school. Actions have been devised to accompany the mission statement which all children know. Children show respect to all visitors, all adults and each other. They respond to the needs of the local and wider community, supporting local and international charities. Strong links with Nazareth House, a care home for the elderly, have been established enabling the children to witness how their good work impacts upon others.

During the inspection pupil behaviour was good. Pupils welcome visitors and are eager to celebrate their school. There is a great sense of community within the school which pupils and parents value. Pupils are aware of who they can speak to for care and support if and when it is needed. Chaplaincy provision is becoming more firmly established and greatly contributes to the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils.

Prayer and worship are central to school life. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop their faith and spirituality. In collective worship observed during the inspection pupils were responsive and attentive. A prayer wall in the school hall is regularly used by pupils to offer their own prayers and special intentions. Several children benefit greatly from the Rainbows programme currently run at the school. Assemblies are well planned and children take an active part in reading scripture, drama and singing.

Progress in RE is in-line with Diocesan expectations. Children participate in RE lessons with enthusiasm, are keen to answer questions, to volunteer opinions and discuss issues. Children demonstrate a good attitude to learning and they cooperate well when working in pairs and larger groups. Children try to do their best and take pride in their work. RE books are regarded as special, work is well-presented and reflects a good understanding of concepts taught and of other faiths. Most children have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith, appropriate to their ability.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

The acting headteacher demonstrates good leadership of the school. She monitors and evaluates the provision for the Catholic life of the school, identifying areas for future improvement. She communicates a clear vision and is supported in this by staff and governors. The school leadership team are deeply committed to the school and to offering the best provision they can for the children. The mission statement has been reviewed by the whole community since the last inspection and underpins everything that happens in the school.

The acting headteacher is also the RE subject leader and, with the chaplaincy team offers good support to her colleagues. The monitoring of teaching and learning in RE is established with regular lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' books and teachers planning. There is also an annual RE development plan in place. Support for non-Catholic staff is provided by the headteacher and chaplaincy team which includes teacher preparation and planning, sharing good practice and ensuring effective use of resources.

Governors work closely with the acting headteacher. They are enthusiastic and involved in the life of the school. However, they need to be more involved in monitoring the provision and standards in order to challenge and support the work of the school further.

St Mary's is an inclusive community which celebrates each individual. Community cohesion is good. The school is welcoming. Everyone is respected and valued. There is a true sense of community and relationships are excellent. Other faiths are taught well and different cultures are celebrated within the school year. Parents are invited to

many school events and assemblies. They are kept well informed about their child's development and progress. The school reaches out to both the local and global community raising money for many charities. The Family Support Worker manages the breakfast club which is funded through the St Vincent de Paul Society and offers much valued support to parents.

Provision

Grade 2

Provision for prayer and worship in the school is good. Beautiful displays and well-presented classroom prayer tables enhance the spiritual atmosphere of the school. There are two beautiful prayer gardens for pupils to use throughout the day. All parents receive the 'Wednesday Word' as a weekly spiritual outreach to children and their families.

The chaplaincy team plan liturgies and assemblies. These include visual presentations, scripture, drama and music. There are planned opportunities throughout the year for pupil involvement in masses, prayer groups and presentations. There is an annual residential pilgrimage to Walsingham for Year 5 pupils. A deacon from the local parish supports the school and is a member of the chaplaincy team.

Teaching at St Mary's is good overall ranging from outstanding to satisfactory. The learning needs of the pupils are met through a range of teaching and learning strategies. Effective use is made of Talking Partners. Where teaching is good teachers are well prepared making effective use of the IWB and a range of resources. Lessons are clearly differentiated providing interesting and motivating learning tasks which fully engage the children. Teachers respond well to pupils comments although opportunities to extend knowledge and develop understanding are occasionally missed. In a minority of lessons teaching was less effective due to the pace, lack of challenge and too much teacher talk.

Pupils are well supported by teaching assistants in many lessons. Staff generally have high expectations for the pupils. The assessment strategies currently being strengthened indicate that standards are likely to improve further. Marking of RE work is positive and often includes suggestions of how pupils can improve their work and move their learning on. Parents and carers can become more involved in their child's learning through termly RE newsletters, parents' forum, questionnaires, parents evening and annual reports.

The RE curriculum is good. 10% of teaching time is devoted to RE. The 'Here I Am' programme is used in KS2 with the new "Come and See" programme in place in KS1 and Early Years. Children are provided with a variety of tasks and activities in RE lessons. There are good opportunities to learn about other faiths and celebrate other cultures. The new assessment practices have improved teachers' understanding of attainment in RE and children's progress. Staff are working together to ensure consistency in levelling work.

The inspectors would like to express their appreciation to the acting headteacher, her staff and the children for their warm welcome and cooperation during the inspection.