

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Melbourn Road, Royston, SG8 7DB

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 17 January 2018



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- The curriculum is varied and creative and is succinctly linked to the Religious Education Curriculum Directory.
- Some pupils make good progress in their knowledge of the Catholic faith.
- The religious literacy of the pupils is developing, particularly in making links with Scripture and everyday experiences.
- Pupils are proud of their school and are fully engaged in their learning.
- Teaching is good overall. The evidence from observations and the scrutiny of the books demonstrates examples of effective teaching.
- The tracking of progress is shared with pupils in Key Stage 2. Younger pupils are aware of how their efforts are tracked in an age – appropriate way.
- The school accurately evaluated that consistent approaches in teaching and learning are being embedded.
- The school has recently re-structured to establish a team approach to the leadership and management of religious education.
- The recently appointed governor for religious education is actively supporting the action priorities.
- The school has recently begun networks within the deanery and the diocese for moderation.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- Pupils do not yet have a deep understanding of theology nor consistent access to scripture. This has an impact on their religious literacy.
- The school has identified that 'next steps in learning' assessment is a priority.

B. The Catholic life of the school is good

- Pupils enjoy a quality and experience of Catholic education that engages them in a rich experience of the teaching and traditions of the Church.
- Resources, staffing and accommodation are good and the school meets the Bishops' Conference requirement for curriculum time for religious education.
- Prayer and worship are central to the school's understanding of itself as a Catholic school.
- St Mary's celebrates a wide range of liturgical and school based worship, which also engages parishioners and families. There are strong links with the parents and families.
- Relationships are strong; respect and nurture of each individual are highly valued. Behaviour is exemplary.
- Pupils are developing their understanding of their call to serve and support many charities.
- Pupils are proud of their engagement with the Common Good, and are actively enabled to develop their individual gifts.
- The vision and dedication of the headteacher is shared with her re-structured leadership team and the recently re-structured governing body.

The Catholic life of the school is not yet outstanding because

- Pupils do not yet own the planning, preparation and delivery of worship.
- Pupils are being supported to understand the theology under-pinning their actions for social justice and the Common Good.
- The recently re-structured governing body is developing better ways to challenge leaders.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

The school has recently devised a system for monitoring the quality of teaching and its impact on learning in religious education (RE). A whole school approach to marking and feedback to pupils has been established, which is now ensuring that marking is more consistent across the school. This includes highlighting the explicit links to the Religious Education Curriculum Directory (RECD). Thought-provoking questions are being increasingly used across Key Stage 2 to challenge pupils in their learning and understanding. Regular pupil progress meetings include measuring progress in religious education as for other core subjects.

The content of classroom religious education is good

The scheme adopted by the school complements and integrates the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Levels of Attainment in Religious Education and the RECD. These topics and themes are supplemented with links to the liturgical cycle and includes other resources which engage and motivate pupils across the key stages. Pupils are empowered to deepen their awareness of their own faith and the faith of others. A creative approach is planned and used by staff to enrich the curriculum in religious education for all pupils. The pupils in Key Stage 2 are encouraged to develop ownership in their learning and progress, through mapping links to the RECD.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Through the monitoring, assessment and tracking process, the school measures the links being made from their chosen scheme within the RECD. There is evidence from the scrutiny of the work in the books that a variety of creative tasks are planned. Through their cycle of classroom observations, scrutiny of work produced and pupil feedback, the school is able to analyse the progress of the religious literacy of the pupils. Links through deanery and diocesan moderation are beginning to provide greater accuracy of levels of attainment for pupils across the phases. In Early Years the learning journals document children's observations, which are linked to religious education, such as preparations for the Christmas celebration. Individual targets are established in Reception which inform rates of progress through the planned units in religious education. The Reception class folder is celebrating their work on 'God's creation,' fostering deeper thinking for these young children. More able pupils are not always effectively challenged with appropriately planned tasks to stretch their knowledge and understanding of the theology underpinning the topics being explored. This is evident in some RE books, compared to other subjects, where extended writing is promoted. However, there are good examples of where planned tasks do challenge in Key Stage 1, where pupils were able to explore the story of the Annunciation; this provided an opportunity for these younger pupils to reflect on the meaning of the story and also for the more able pupils to do this at a deeper level.

The quality of teaching is good

The subject knowledge of the staff is monitored regularly through the termly monitoring cycle. The links to the RECD are planned within the school scheme and creative approaches are used to enhance the teaching strategies in religious education across the school. In their books, pupils record the progress of their growing understanding of the strands in the curriculum, thus empowering ownership of their learning. The development of higher level questioning, the planning which emphasises cross-curricular links and the effective subject knowledge of the teachers have contributed to the increased levels of religious literacy across the phases at appropriate age and ability levels. This includes some planned questioning to challenge the more able pupils within key stages; there is now robust and regular scrutiny of progress over time which supports the

achievement of the higher levels of attainment. In Early Years there is inconsistent questioning. Evidence of good practice was seen in Reception where pupils were encouraged to use religious vocabulary, under the theme, 'Getting to know Jesus', through both a display of key words and good modelling by adults. One of the non-teaching staff ensured misconceptions were addressed when discussing Jesus as the Messiah. In a Key Stage 1 class, the lack of planned questioning for the ability levels of the pupils denied them the opportunity to expand their thinking and understanding on the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple. The role of the other adults in the learning in many classes is passive, concentrating on recording the responses from the pupils, rather than guiding their thinking. The mentoring carried out by the leader for religious education is supporting a more consistent approach across the phases. The outcome from pupil progress meetings provides opportunities for those identified more able pupils to be challenged further. The use of the recently introduced 'growth mind-set' initiative has supported the independent learning styles of the pupils.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is good

Religious education is given due status and the high expectations of the leaders of religious education reflects the determination, drive and ambition which are modelled by the senior staff. The system of teaching for consistency and delivery of 'quality first teaching,' for all core subjects, including religious education, are identified priorities across the school. The leader of religious education is a role model, with her precise planning, robust monitoring systems and dedication to excellence, and is the hallmark of the practice across the school. The senior leadership team work in close partnership with the governing body. The designated governor for religious education has first-hand knowledge and understanding of the provision for religious education. The leader ensures that the governing body is kept fully abreast of key requirements for effective provision, including the guidance from the diocese and the sharing of good practice including for moderation through the deanery and diocesan networks.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Ensure that planning includes opportunities for challenge, including higher order questioning.
- Setting appropriate tasks and assessments at appropriate ability levels and feedback which challenges pupils to achieve the higher levels.
- Develop use of Scripture across the phases at age appropriate levels, to include opportunities for pupils to have ready access to Bibles and to develop and deepen their religious literacy.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

Pupil voice has been developed. The exploration of other faiths includes the effective use of pupils of other faiths sharing their special times and how important their faith is to them. The school has further expanded the teaching of other faiths with planned visits to the Hindu Temple in Neasden, the Gudwaha in Hitchin and a local mosque in Stevenage. The exploration of Judaism has been supported by the invitation to the local rabbi to provide an assembly for pupils. These strategies are enabling pupils at age appropriate levels to explore their own faith, develop their tolerance and understanding of other faiths and have an understanding of the importance of this for life in modern Britain.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is good

The school fully meets the requirement of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales for RE to have 10% curriculum time. The governing body ensures that funding for religious education matches that for other core subjects. Liturgy is central to the prayer life of the school, as evidenced by the permanent altar in the hall and the development more recently of the 'Prayer Garden.' The enhancement of the prayer life of the school is a high priority in all decisions and planning. The outcomes of regular audits of resources and skills for religious education and the Catholic life of the school are reflected within the schedule of continuing professional development.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

is good

This Catholic community ensures that worship and prayer are integral to all aspects of the day to day life in the school at age appropriate levels. There is a 'sacred space' set aside in all classes, reflecting the liturgical cycle. Pupils are encouraged to write their own prayers, linked to the ongoing topic being explored or special feast days and liturgical events, such as during Advent and Lent. Pupils are encouraged to support the planning, delivery and celebration of a range of liturgical acts of worship, including the Mass. Local parishioners comment on the reverence and respectfulness of the Key Stage 2 pupils, who regularly worship in church. Weekly Mass in the summer term across Key Stage 2, includes the invitation to parents and family members, who really appreciate these intimate opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist with their children. The development of their range of 'other faith' exploration and planned teaching is supported also by the GENR8 'ecumenical assemblies' organised for the pupils. The school mission statement is the focus for all aspects of school life and all meetings begin with a prayer.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –

is good

The pupils can speak about their role in society to promote social justice and to support the Common Good. They fundraise for a range of charities and have some understanding of the theology underpinning the purpose of these fundraising activities across the school year, for example their international support for the self-sustainability of villages in Uganda, through the 'Kanyike' project. Their Lenten ventures include supporting the Sisters of Charity and their work for the 'missio' project. Older pupils support the ecumenical Lenten projects, including fundraising for Cafod and Christian Aid. The school is developing its 'Mini Vinnies' group in collaboration with the parish justice and peace groups and the St Vincent de Paul Society. Another example of their response to the call to justice, is where the Year 6 pupils led the 'Holocaust' Assembly. This is addressing the

importance of equality and social justice and peace for all. Pupils participate in a range of acts of worship and service and demonstrate a growing understanding of the theology underpinning these actions.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

is good

The school has developed a range of opportunities to develop their relationships within the school and parish communities. Parish members, parents and friends are warmly invited to all liturgical and special celebrations. These include during Advent, Christmas, Lent and special assemblies, such as Remembrance Day and the Holocaust Memorial Day. Parental involvement is welcomed, for example in reviewing the relationships and sex education programme. Pupil forums have a Catholicity section on the website and the regularly updated newsletter includes a 'spirituality' section. The school is a member of the Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust, (DOWAT), through which the school has widened its outreach, including support and partnership with another DOWAT school. The headteacher is an active member of the DOWAT board, which has developed models for sharing good practice across the academy. The headteacher is also part of diocesan working party to develop a schools' effectiveness service, in partnership with St Mary's University.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school

is good

The strong strategic and dedicated commitment of the leadership, including the governors of the school, is a hallmark of all they aspire to achieve. They are effective role models and provide witness to the faith in all decisions taken on behalf of the whole school community. They have high expectations as they constantly strive for sustained improvement and development of all aspects of school life, in particular the Catholic life of the school and the provision for effective religious education. The governors seek the views of their stakeholders, who overwhelmingly support, value and appreciate all that the school provides. The effective links and networks within the deanery and through DOWAT are developing in the school's constant striving for excellence.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Empower the pupils to plan, lead and deliver appropriate liturgies, including class worship and relevant liturgical celebrations.
- Further enhance the opportunities for pupils' contributions to the range of activities in developing their actions for social justice and the common good, being displayed publicly around the school and classrooms, as well as the effective 'Twitter Feed' system on the website.
- Fully embed the more regular monitoring and evaluation systems.

Information about this school

- The school is a one form entry Catholic Primary school in the locality of Royston.
- The school serves the parishes of St Thomas of Canterbury and English Martyrs, Hertfordshire and the surrounding villages
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 73%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 18% and from other faiths is 6%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 77%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 0%.
- There are 19% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 3 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is below average.
- There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 18 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (8%).

Department for Education Number	919/5200
Unique Reference Number	38292
Local Authority	Hertfordshire

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	3 -11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	221
The appropriate authority	Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust
Chair	Mr John Williams
Headteacher	Mrs Julia Pearce
Telephone number	01763 246021
Website	www.stmarysroyston.co.uk
Email address	email@stmarys-royston.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 th January 2013
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Good
The Catholic life of the school	Very Good

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 8 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended an assembly.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

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