



ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

BIRCHLEY

Inspection Date	5 November 2019
Inspectors	Mrs. Pat Peel Mr. Barry Broderick
Unique Reference Number	104813
Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011	

Type of School	Catholic Primary
Age range of pupils	4 - 11
Number on roll	204
Chair of Governors	Mr. Wayne Leatherbarrow
Headteacher	Mrs. Andrea Hymers
School address	Birchley Road Billinge Wigan WN5 7QJ
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Date of last inspection	15 October 14

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about this school

- St. Mary's is an average sized Catholic Primary School situated in Billinge, St. Helens serving the parish of St. Mary's.
- There are 204 children on roll of whom 172 are baptised Catholic, 10 come from other Christian denominations and 1 from other faith or religious traditions. Twenty-one children have no religious affiliation.
- There are thirteen teachers. Nine of which teach Religious Education. Seven teachers are baptised Catholic. Seven teachers have a suitable qualification in Religious Education.
- Since the last inspection a new Headteacher has been appointed and a new senior leadership team established which includes the subject leader.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

St. Mary's is an outstanding school in providing Catholic Education.

CATHOLIC LIFE

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

- The extent to which the pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.
- Pupils truly appreciate, value and actively participate in the Catholic Life at St. Mary's. They know, own and live out their Mission Statement, *'St. Mary's school is a safe and happy place, where we follow Jesus by living, loving learning and working together'*. The pupils use the subsequent motto, *'Being the best we can be'*.
- Pupils show a deep respect for themselves and others as made in the image and likeness of God. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. In proportion to their years they show an ability to listen, to give thanks, to forgive and be forgiven. They are quick to congratulate others and have a very good understanding of right and wrong.
- Pupils enthusiastically embrace the demands that members of the school community entail such as becoming school and eco councillors, house captains, monitors, worship warriors and play leaders.
- They take a leading role in those activities which promote the schools' Catholic Life and mission both within school and in the wider community such as fundraising for numerous charities e.g. CAFOD, MacMillan, British Legion, Roald Dahl's Children's Charity to name but a few. Within the locality they have supported the local parish community collecting food for the Harvest festival.
- Pupils have worked with the local high school, St. Peter's in collecting sanitary products and gloves in support of the hurricane relief operation in Barbados.
- Pupils value and fully participate in opportunities provided by the school including a range of before, during and after school clubs including Zumba, guitars, games, archery, Lego, seasonal sports and Quad kids.
- Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities the school provides for their personal support and development they have an outstanding sense of belonging. As a result, they are happy, confident and secure in their own stage of physical, emotional and spiritual growth.
- The choir performs at school and many parish and community events including singing in the community at the pensioners Christmas party, St. Helen's Parish Church and the Town Hall. Y6 has taken part in 'The Big Sing Thing' at John Rigby Catholic College alongside other primary feeder schools and the 'Eucharistic Voices' celebration at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ The King at the end of the Year of the Eucharist.
- Pupils, appropriate to their age and capability, have begun relationships and sexual development lessons within the context of a Christian understanding.
- Pupils benefit from undertaking outdoor residential visits. Year 6 pupils visit Robinwood Activity Centre in Wrexham, Wales.
- Pupils enthusiastically embrace a holistic approach to education, understand what it means to have a vocation and recognise the importance of using their gifts in the service of others.

- They have an acute sense of being a member of the local Billinge community and have taken part in the Walk of Witness, lighting the Billinge Christmas tree, and Remembrance events.
- Some of the pupils have trained as Worship Warriors to support different aspects of the prayer life of the school.
- Pupils are rewarded with house points and 'Star of the Week' at their Friday celebration assemblies. They are also rewarded around school with pompoms by their teachers and others as 'bucket fillers' actively recognised for living out the school values. When class buckets are full pupils are treated.
- Pupil voice is very strong in the school. They have 'chatterboxes' around for ideas, worries etc. and they enjoy the opportunity to have tea@2 with the Headteacher on a regular basis.
- Pupils value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and its links with the parish community and the Archdiocese. As a result, they respect and are involved with St. Mary's parish community.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.
- The school Mission Statement, '*St. Mary's school is a safe and happy place, where we follow Jesus by living, loving learning and working together*' and subsequent motto, '*Being the best we can be*' borne out of it are a clear expression of the educational mission of the Church. It underpins every aspect of school life at St. Mary's.
- All staff are fully committed to its implementation across the curriculum. They enthusiastically participate in school activities which reflect the Catholic Life and mission of the school.
- There is a keen sense of community at all levels, evident in the high-quality relationships and the centrality of prayer to the whole community. The school is an extremely supportive and joyful community.
- The school environment reflects its mission and identity through concrete and effective signs of the school's Catholic character. The displays, classroom focus' and sacred reflective spaces all create an overwhelming yet calm ambience which exudes St. Mary's catholicity and ethos. This is tangible throughout the school.
- Staff promote high standards of behaviour and are exemplary role models of mutual respect and forgiveness for pupils inside and outside of the classroom.
- The curriculum reflects a commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, to care for our common home and to the dignity of every human person through its fundraising, eco stewardship and outreach opportunities in the locality.
- The school provides opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of all pupils and staff through prayer and continuous professional development opportunities such as attendance at Archdiocesan led in-service days.
- Clear policies and structures are in place, which provide the highest levels of pastoral care for pupils, and there is an explicit and concrete commitment to the most vulnerable and needy in both policy and practice.
- The school benefits from a nurture room where pupils can take 'time out' if they need to during the school day.
- The school is equally attentive to the pastoral needs of members of staff and pupils and ensures that every member's needs are understood and catered for.
- Following the recent illness and retirement of the much-loved, supportive parish priest, the new parish priest has begun to visit the school and build up a relationship with the pupils and staff. Catechists recruited from the governing body and parish support the pupils and their families undertaking the With You Always Sacramental programme.

- All the relevant documentation is in place and the school has made a commitment to support Relationships and Sex Education alongside Personal, Social and Health Education.
- The school has an active Parents and Friends Association which supports the school with fundraising activities.
- The 'Prayer Garden' is used throughout the year, weather dependent, as a place to reflect and worship.
- The school provides in-house before and after school provision throughout the year. This is popular and well attended.
- The school hosts a mother and toddler group.

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

- Leaders and governors are outstanding in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- The schools' leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. Leaders are energised by the task and are a source of inspiration for the whole community. The development of the Catholic Life of the school is viewed by leaders and governors as a core leadership responsibility.
- It is highly recommended that Leaders and governors undertake a full review of the Mission Statement with all stakeholders i.e. staff including non-teaching and ancillary, governors, parents and pupils in the next academic year. Whilst the Mission Statement is known and lived out in the school it was created before the current Headteacher undertook her post and needs to reflect the opinions and life of the school community today.
- The provision for the Catholic Life of the school is given priority by leaders and is reflected in the school's self-evaluation document which is a coherent reflection of monitoring, analysis and self-challenge and is clearly focused on the Catholic Life of the school.
- Relationships at every level are outstanding in this very friendly, warm and welcoming school community.
- Continuous Professional Development focusing on the Catholic Life of the school occurs and is effective. The commitment of leaders, governors and the parish to support staff undertaking the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) and newly and recently qualified teachers is commendable.
- The school has successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers to the benefit of pupils, including those who might traditionally find working with the school difficult. The school offers an open-door policy, sends out regular newsletters including the Wednesday Word, has an up to date website and blog. As a result, parents and carers have an outstanding understanding of the school's mission and are supportive of it.
- Parents are invited to have 'coffee and tea with the SLT' as a way to express their views on the Catholic Life of the school on a regular basis.
- The home, school and parish links are well forged at St. Mary's. The Link Governor with responsibility for Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship is very active in the parish and supports the school in a variety of ways.
- As leaders, the governing body is highly ambitious for the Catholic Life of the school and leads by example in the way it emphasises Catholic Life as a school improvement priority. Many of the governors are active in St. Mary's parish and they make a valuable contribution to the Catholic Life of the school. They are very supportive of the school's Mission.

- The school responds well to Archdiocesan policies and initiatives and promotes the Archdiocesan vision for the Archdiocese throughout the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- The extent to which pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding.
- Pupils, from their varied starting points, make excellent progress in each key stage.
- Groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are also making progress comparable to the progress of other pupils.
- Pupils, relative to their age and capacity, are religiously literate and engaged young people; they use their knowledge, understanding and skills, to reflect spiritually, and to think ethically and theologically. Pupils are aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.
- Pupils are actively engaged in lessons and are committed to improving their knowledge, understanding and skills to further develop as competent learners.
- Pupils concentrate well and understand how well they are doing because they are very familiar with the Driver Words.
- Pupils approach their lessons with interest and enthusiasm. This was highly evident throughout the school as pupils quickly settled to tasks and responded positively throughout the day as they undertook lessons on Hinduism as part of their Other Faiths and Religions week.
- Pupils enjoy a range of activities and respond extremely well to opportunities which extend their learning. Behaviour for learning is exemplary because pupils enjoy Religious Education and disruptions in lessons are unusual.
- The quality of pupils' current work, both orally in class and in written work, is outstanding. Pupils take pride in their workbooks and the presentation is of a very high standard.
- Rejoice celebration books are testament to the wealth of work pupils have undertaken throughout topics.
- Pupils' are undertaking formal assessment in line with Archdiocesan guidance and evidence kept.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.
- On the day of inspection there was some outstanding practice observed with nothing less than good.
- Staff are currently using the Archdiocesan template for planning Religious Education.
- Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and have a very good understanding of how pupils learn.
- Teachers employ a range of appropriate strategies, including individual, paired and collaborative work. Consequently, pupils are inspired, motivated and concentrate extremely well in lessons.
- Staff have very high expectations and through reinforcement of the school motto have created a 'can do' culture.

- In books there is evidence of continuity in lessons and across sequences of lessons. Work is of a high quality and very well presented.
- In the best lessons observed teachers used questioning techniques very well. They adapted explanations using the language of the new standards i.e. driver words catering for the needs of all pupils.
- High quality resources e.g. *Come and See* website, *God's and Church's Story*, audio and visual media are employed to engage pupils in their learning. This was particularly evident in one class where the teacher had created an array of resources to support pupils' researching Pilgrimages to the Ganges including Information Communication Technology (ICT).
- Other adults and dedicated workspaces are used very effectively to optimise learning for pupils who need their support and encouragement to maximise their outcomes. They are a real strength in the school.
- Achievement and effort are celebrated immediately leading to outstanding levels of motivation from pupils.
- Pupils have studied Judaism, Hinduism as part of their Other Faiths and Religions topics. They have been visited by a visitor, who led a range of activities and spoke about her Hindu faith and they have visited the Synagogue and Temple. This helps to promote tolerance and respect of others who are different from themselves.

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

- Leaders and governors are outstanding in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for Religious Education.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect in each key stage.
- Leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education has full parity with other core curriculum subjects including professional development, resourcing, staffing and accommodation.
- The subject leader regularly attends Archdiocesan in-service training and meets together with other local schools to support monitoring and evaluation of the subject.
- Since the last inspection the *Come and See* programme has been fully implemented across the school and all relevant documentation e.g. planning, monitoring and tracking are fully embedded.
- Leaders' and governors' self-evaluation of Religious Education is a coherent reflection of rigorous assessment, tracking, monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge which is informed by best practice in Religious Education.
- Whole school tracking is in place and the subject leader has begun to adopt a different bespoke approach in line with the Bishop of England and Wales directive regarding the draft Interim Standards.
- The subject leader is also the deputy and is a real strength in the school. She has an inspiring vision of outstanding teaching and learning and a high level of expertise in securing this vision. She is passionate and highly committed to the role. Since the monitoring visit she has continued to drive forward standards.
- Leaders and governors ensure that Religious Education is planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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

- Pupils response to and participation in the school's Collective Worship is outstanding.
- Pupils act with reverence and are keen to participate in Collective Worship.
- Pupils sing joyfully and John Burland music is used to good effect.
- Pupils reflected in silence following the Word and joined in community prayer appropriately.
- Early foundations for worship are clearly evident across the school.
- Some pupils are routinely involved in planning, preparing and/or leading worship with confidence, enthusiasm and a degree of independence.
- The Worship Warriors for this academic year have recently begun their preparations and are looking forward to supporting worship and prayer across the school in due course.
- Pupils are not yet regularly evaluating Collective Worship. This needs to be further developed across the school to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity both as a leader and a participant.
- Pupils value and participate voluntarily in liturgy and say that they really enjoy Collective Worship in class. A child commented; "I love the quiet time to reflect and speak to God in my own way."
- Pupils have a developing understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons and feasts.
- The experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community has a positive impact on the spiritual and moral development of pupils, irrespective of ability or faith background. They have a well-developed sense of respect for those of other faiths.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school is outstanding.
- Collective Worship is central of the life of the school and prayer is included in all school celebrations.
- Praying together is part of the daily experience for pupils and staff.
- Collective Worship and resourcing are given a high priority in the school.
- Collective Worship has a purpose, message and direction although evidence suggests on occasion pupils have not always listened to scripture during it. This needs to be addressed to ensure all pupils are exposed to the Word of God.
- Staff have a good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts.
- The themes chosen for worship reflect a good understanding of the liturgical seasons and the Catholic character of the school.
- 'Stay and Pray' and other opportunities are planned in a manner that facilitates attendance by other adults associated with the pupils and school and response to this invitation is very good.
- The new parish priest has begun to preside at Mass for key celebrations throughout the Church's liturgical year.

How well leaders, governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship

- Leaders and governors are outstanding in promoting, monitoring and evaluating the provision for Collective Worship.
- Leaders know how to provide policies and guidelines to plan and deliver quality Collective Worship. There is an up to date policy in place.
- Leaders have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts. They make these accessible to the pupils in a contemporary context.
- Leaders of Collective Worship within the school are excellent models of good practice for staff and pupils.
- Leaders promote pupils' planning and leading Collective Worship with support from the class teacher.
- Governors are always invited to celebrations across the Church's year.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Further develop the work being undertaken in Catholic Life by:
 - undertaking a full review of the Mission Statement with all stakeholders in the next academic year to ensure it reflects the school in light of the new leadership;
 - continuing to embed '*Journey in Love*' into lessons to support Relationships and Sex Education.
- Raise the standards of attainment in Religious Education further by:
 - continuing to develop the tracking of Religious Education and monitor the impact of assessment data:
 - continuing to address the areas identified on the Self Evaluation Document.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	1
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CATHOLIC LIFE

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school	1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	1
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education	1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship	1

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is Outstanding, Grade 2 Good, Grade 3 Requires Improvement and Grade 4 Inadequate