

DIOCESAN CANONICAL INSPECTION REPORT
THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL, RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Part of Plymouth CAST MAT
Northbrook Road, Swanage, Dorset

Inspection dates: 25th February 2020
Lead Inspector: Maureen O'Leary

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| OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS: | Good |
| Catholic Life: | Good |
| Religious Education: | Requires Improvement |
| Collective Worship: | Good |

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection: *Good*

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

This is a Good Catholic school because:

- Leaders and governors are committed to promoting and developing the Catholic identity of the school. They have ensured that the school environment reflects this identity.
- Leaders, governors, staff and pupils are united in living out the Gospel values, which are the foundation of the school community. The whole curriculum promotes Catholic social teaching and inspires all to turn faith into action.
- Religious Education is well led by the subject leader and valued by pupils and staff. Staff are committed to improving teaching in Religious Education.
- Staff and pupils appreciate their daily experiences of prayer, especially the Examen at the end of the school day. The Year 5 & 6 Chaplaincy team have made a significant impact on the prayer life of the school.

It is not yet Outstanding because:

- The self-evaluation of Catholic Life by leaders and governors is not sufficiently rigorous and robust.
- The majority of Religious Education teaching is not yet consistently good.
- Some classes do not regularly say a daily morning prayer.
- Pupils of all ages do not plan and lead Collective Worship.

FULL REPORT

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders and governors have a secure understanding of the different areas of Catholic Life. Establish a schedule of monitoring that targets specific areas of Catholic Life. Evaluation of this monitoring should inform improvement planning.
- Ensure teaching in Religious Education is consistently good by:
 - Improving teachers' subject knowledge
 - Increasing teachers' confidence
 - Providing greater challenge to pupils, especially the more able
 - Providing adequate scrutiny by governors about standards.
- Monitor the delivery of class morning prayers to ensure they are being said daily by all classes.
- Provide training for staff so that they can support pupils of all ages to plan and lead Collective Worship.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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

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

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school

- The school's motto, "Be loving and truthful", is well known by all pupils, staff and by some parents. Staff are committed to supporting pupils to understand and express the motto. Consequently, pupils constantly try to live out this motto and clearly understand that it is inspired by the teachings of Jesus Christ.
- All pupils have opportunities to take part in the Catholic Life of the school. They regularly respond with generosity and compassion to raising money for charitable causes. For example, the school has supported the local foodbank, refugees and CAFOD. Pupils are also challenged to raise funds through their own initiatives.
- Older pupils take leadership roles in the recently formed Chaplaincy Team and the Green Team. The Green Teams' excellent work, based on *Laudate Si*, has not only had an effect on other pupils' behaviour but has also challenged the environmental habits of the local community and members of the diocese. Chaplaincy Team members are buddied with classes, where they offer reading and pastoral support to younger pupils. They are earnest and devoted when carrying out these roles.
- Pupils' appreciate that adults are interested in their views. Older pupils from the Green Team and the Chaplaincy Team have helped to shape the new school behaviour policy, including the way pupils receive rewards and sanctions. They ensured that this policy includes the Gospel values.

- Staff routinely teach pupils about the Gospel values and model how to live by them. Pupils have a thorough understanding of how these values should shape their behaviour both in and out of school. As a result, the behaviour of pupils is very good.
- Staff have established very good relationships with pupils, especially those with emotional and behavioural needs. Pupils overwhelmingly appreciate the care and compassion that staff give to them, which helps them feel safe and happy. This especially helps new pupils to settle quickly at the school.
- The school, supported by the parish priest, has made very good links with the local community through the work of Churches Together. Pupils visit the local Christian churches where they sing and take part in key events. The school and parish also pray together at school Masses, which usually take place at the school. Parishioners are made very welcome to these Masses. Some older pupils have also visited the parish Church to talk about *Laudate Si*. Both the school and parish are keen to increase the involvement of families in the parish. This could be supported by more regular visits or Masses in the parish church.
- Pupils have a general awareness of other faiths and religions. They have a stronger understanding that all people, of whatever faith or belief, should be treated with respect.
- Statues of Our Lady (the school patron saint), displays in communal areas and class prayer spaces all reflect the Catholic identity of the school in a dignified and informative way. These help pupils to understand the Catholic faith, their role in leading Catholic Life and the Church's social teaching.
- A comprehensive remodelling of the Curriculum has placed the Pope's teaching found in *Laudate Si* at its heart. As this new curriculum is taught, pupils of all ages are becoming acutely aware of Catholic social teaching in a wide variety of topics. For example, the topic of World War II includes a focus on the plight of refugees.
- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is taught within the context of the Catholic Church, using resources endorsed by the Diocesan Education Service.

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

- Leaders and governors are committed to promoting the Catholic Life of the school and are increasingly focused on its development through the revised curriculum.
- School leaders have an awareness of the strengths of Catholic Life but have a less precise understanding of the areas that need to improve further.
- The processes used to monitor and evaluate Catholic Life would benefit from review. Monitoring should focus on key areas that need developing and should help leaders to plan improvements.
- Governors have less understanding of standards of Catholic Life in the school. The recent appointment of Catholic Life link governors is a useful step to improve this understanding.
- New staff to the school have an awareness of its Catholic identity and their role in supporting Catholic Life. The Religious Education subject leader provides highly valued ongoing support for all staff to improve their understanding of Catholic Life. However, more regular specific training about Catholic Life, and more times to pray and celebrate Mass together as a staff should be considered.
- All the parents spoken to by the inspectors and the majority of parents who responded to the school questionnaire support the Catholic mission of the school. They especially appreciate the care and moral guidance that their children receive from staff. The school website provides a very good source of information for parents about Catholic Life events.

- Leaders and governors fully implement the diocesan Bishop's decisions in regard to Catholic Life.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education **The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education**

- Teachers' improving planning skills and their use of pupil assessment is helping them to increasingly plan lessons linked to pupils' current ability. However, these skills need to be further embedded, so that all pupils are sufficiently challenged in their learning.
- While some pupils are making good progress in Religious Education, a significant number do not make enough progress. This is especially so for those pupils who are more able.
- Most pupils with special educational needs and or disabilities are supported to understand and complete their work appropriately. They often have the support of teaching assistants, whose questioning generally challenges pupils' thinking. Occasionally, these additional adults are underused during class teaching.
- Where teachers have secure subject knowledge, pupils are able to deepen their understanding of Religious Education and engage in challenging discussions, which helps them to make connections between different sources of evidence. However, some teachers' lack of confident subject knowledge limits pupils' knowledge, understanding and ability to question at a deeper level.
- All teachers provide a range of teaching strategies and activities that engage pupils. These include drama, art, craft and written work. However, there are too few opportunities for in-depth reflective writing, which would allow pupils to work at a higher standard.
- Teachers regularly help pupils to think about the relevance of Religious Education to their lives. As a result, pupils readily apply what they learn to their own moral and ethical thinking, and behaviour.
- Teachers give pupils some opportunities to reflect on the quality of their work, through the use of pink and green pens. Older pupils, especially, understand how this can help them to improve.
- Teachers have established good relationships with pupils and expectations of behaviour. As a result, pupils work well both independently and with their peers.

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

- Senior leaders, governors and especially the Religious Education subject leader have ensured that the requirements of the Bishops' Conference regarding Religious Education resourcing, curriculum time and parity with other core subjects are met.
- Senior leaders make good use of links with the Plymouth Cast and the Diocesan Education Service to keep the subject leader up to date with current developments and to provide training for staff.
- Religious Education is led by a dedicated subject leader. She provides regular whole school training for staff and ongoing support to improve teaching. As a result, standards in teaching are gradually improving.
- The excellent rapport she has built up with staff means that they are keen to come to her for support and guidance. They are also increasingly supported by a growing bank of central resources.
- Leaders' planned monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education has enabled them to accurately identify key areas that require improvement. This has led to targeted actions and whole school initiatives. For example, the recent inclusion of Religious Education at pupil progress meetings is helping teachers provide greater challenge in lessons.
- Although governors value Religious Education as a core subject, they have a limited understanding of the standards of teaching and learning. Their scrutiny of pupil outcomes needs to be more rigorous and robust.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school

- The whole school community is invigorated by their experiences of Collective Worship, which form part of each school day.
- Staff appreciate how Collective Worship allows them to come closer to God, to reflect and to pray. They almost exclusively act as good role models for pupils. As a result, pupils take part reverently in Collective Worship with an awareness that they are talking and listening to God.
- Pupils have the opportunity to take part in a variety of forms of prayer and liturgy. They respond particularly well to class worship led by the Chaplaincy Team and the daily Examen led by class teachers. This prayer, at the end of the day, helps them reflect on how well they have lived out the Gospel values. In turn, this has led to improved behaviour of pupils throughout the school.

- Mass is regularly and celebrated in school, where the pupils read the liturgy of the Word and pray with reverence.
- Collective Worship is often enhanced by the pupils' devout singing. A collaboration with a local composer has resulted in a number of new hymns, including a meaningful school hymn, based on the words, "Be Loving and Truthful". Pupils in Year 5 have composed a hymn linked to the Gospel Values and Year 6 have been inspired to write about *Laudate Si*. This has helped pupils to link prayer, faith and action.
- Lunchtime and evening times prayers are appreciated by staff and pupils and are routinely said each day. However, not all classes consistently recite a morning prayer.
- The themes and purpose of Collective Worship has been well planned to reflect the liturgical calendar, Gospel values, *Laudate Si* and world events. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of these themes and the seasons of the Church.
- Class teachers have supported and accommodated the Chaplaincy Team to lead, and increasingly plan, quality Collective Worship across the school. Building on this success, consideration should now be given to providing opportunities for younger pupils to lead class prayer.
- The school regularly informs parents of any opportunities to attend whole school worship and Mass. A small number of parents attend, and the school is focused on increasing this number further. Several members of the parish also regularly attend Masses celebrated at the school.

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

- The headteacher and the Religious Education subject leader have ensured that appropriate physical environments and pupil behaviours in classrooms and the school hall have been created for meaningful Collective Worship.
- The Religious Education subject leader works well with the parish priest to plan the times and themes of school Masses.
- The school was one of the first diocesan schools to pilot a pupil Chaplaincy Team. Aably led by the Religious Education subject leader, this newly formed team have had a profound impact on both pupils and staff.
- Staff have benefitted from Collective Worship training from the Religious Education subject leader.
- Collective Worship has been monitored by the Religious Education subject leader, the link governor and by the headteacher. This has led to planned improvements to worship.

SCHOOL DETAILS

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| Unique reference number | 140740 |
| Local authority | Dorset |
| <i>This inspection was carried out under Canon 806 of Canon Law and under Section 48 of the 2005 Education Act.</i> | |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy |
| Age range | 4-11 years |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on roll | 194 |
| Appropriate authority | The board of directors |
| Chair | James Porter |
| Headteacher | Maria Gadston |
| Telephone number | 01929424909 |
| Website address | https://stmarysswanage.dorset.sch.uk |
| Email address | office@stmarysswanage.dorset.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | February 2015 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SCHOOL

- The school is an averaged sized primary school, serving the parish of The Holy Spirit and St Edward and the seaside town of Swanage.
- The percentage of Catholic pupils is currently 22%
- The percentage of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and or disabilities is above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origins is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is below the national average.
- Attainment on entry is below average.
- Significant changes since the last inspection; new headteacher and acting deputy, significant growth in pupil numbers, as with other schools in the local area it is extremely difficult to recruit new staff, new Diocesan inspection framework.

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors: Maureen O'Leary and Helen Armstrong.
- The focus of the inspection was on the impact, quality and leadership of the school's provision of Catholic Life, Religious Education and Collective Worship.

- The inspectors observed teaching across six Religious Education lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Some of these lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic Life, the impact of Religious Education teaching on their learning over time and their experience of Collective Worship.
- Meetings were held with the chair of governors, the headteacher, the Religious Education subject leader, a group of staff and the parish priest.
- The inspectors attended a whole school Collective Worship (led by Year 6 pupils), met with parents before school on the playground and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in Religious Education, the presentation of the Catholic Life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' attainment and progress, Analyse School Performance (ASP) data, the school development plan, the Religious Education action plan, teachers' planning and learning journals.