

DIOCESE OF LEEDS DBI



SECTION 48  
REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL  
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Tentergate Road  
Knaresborough  
HG5 9GB

School URN

121637

Chair of Governors

Mr Paul Bryant

Headteacher

Mrs Chris Wray

RE Subject Leader

Mrs Chris Wray

Date of Inspection

19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> May 2009

Section 48 Inspector

Mrs Christine Rothwell

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Knaresborough, was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Leeds Diocesan Framework and Schedule for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Bishop of Leeds.

### **Description of the school**

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St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a popular one form entry school serving the parish of St Mary's, Knaresborough initially but drawing from a wider community with some pupils traveling a long distance. There are 201 pupils on roll of whom 77% are Catholic. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage with a well-integrated group of Travelling families. The proportion of pupils entitled to Free School Meals is below National average as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities although the number of pupils in receipt of a statement of need is above that for similar schools. St Mary's is presently over subscribed for September 2009 with few vacancies throughout the school. Presently there are two pupils with English as an additional language with application information indicating a rise in 2009/10

There are 8 (fte) teachers four of whom hold CCRS or equivalent. There are 7.6 (fte) Catholic teachers.

St Mary's is currently undergoing a large scale building project to provide much needed space for its increasing numbers. This has affected the use of the school hall, currently a classroom, and the outdoor space which has a reflective area and an outdoor classroom.

The school has received the Basic Skills award and Investors in People and is currently working towards the Healthy School's award and Dyslexia friendly status. It has also received many other accolades including Yorkshire in Bloom, an environmental award for a woodland classroom and an Inclusion Quality Mark (Level 5 – Highly Inclusive).

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

The overall provision of Catholic Education at St Mary's Catholic Primary School is outstanding. Every aspect of school life is at least good, many are outstanding. Governance and management of the school by leaders at all levels is outstanding. Spirituality underpins the unity of purpose displayed by every member of the school staff and is a significant strength of the school. The provision for the prayer and liturgical life of the school is outstanding and every member of the school community is afforded the opportunity to enrich their own faith journey in a spiritual, peaceful and secure environment. The teaching of Religious Education (RE) is consistently good with many outstanding features. Pupil attainment and progress in the subject is good. Pupils flourish as a result of the high quality of care, encouragement and support they receive. Their spiritual and moral development is a strength of the school and their behaviour exemplary at all times. Parents are actively involved in the life of the school and are delighted with all it offers their children and their families. There is a tangible and vibrant sense of mission permeating the community who passionately fulfill their stated aims.

### **The effectiveness of steps taken to promote improvement since the last Inspection.**

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All aspects for improvement identified in the previous inspection have been addressed successfully and many new initiatives have been introduced which are having a significant impact on the Catholic life of the school and on pupils' attainment and progress in RE. Particular attention has been paid to the development of strong links between the Parish, home and school resulting in one community working together for the benefit of all. Governor and clergy involvement, particularly in the spiritual dimension of school life, supports the faith development and confidence of all members of the school community.

### **The capacity to make further improvements.**

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The school has a strong capacity to make further improvements. Key priorities for improvement relating directly to the Religious Education of the school are clearly identified in the School Improvement Plan (SIP). Leaders at all levels, supported by staff, parents and pupils are committed to effecting ongoing improvement and have a very strong capacity to do so.

### **How might the school further improve the provision of Catholic education?**

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In line with its own SIP, and in its ongoing determination to meet the needs of every pupil and raise standards in RE, the school will continue to monitor and evaluate assessment in RE including the development of rigorous moderating systems and targets. These will be readily accessible and collated by the RE subject leader.

The school has identified the need to raise the achievement of the higher ability pupils in line with other core subjects.

## THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

### How effective are Leadership and Management in developing the Catholic life of the school?

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The Mission Statement states '...our community creates a challenging, stimulating and positive learning environment where Christ is at the centre of all that we do and is our inspiration.'

The School Vision states that 'St Mary's is a caring, Christian family that celebrates and nurtures each person's unique potential.'

These two statements are upheld by the whole of the school community. All persons are very aware of them and live by them celebrating the uniqueness of each person.

All members of the governing body and leadership team communicate a strong sense of spiritual purpose with a focus on promoting high standards and the fullest personal development of the pupils.

The Governing Body is outstanding in the fulfillment of its role. The Chair of Governors is in regular contact with the school as are his fellow governors and they are all well informed of what daily life in the school entails. Many are actively involved in school life and record their visits. Strategic governance through sub-committee structures is highly effective ensuring that the governing body not only has a very clear understanding of its responsibilities and the direction it wishes the school to take but has enabled them to make quality staffing appointments. It has encouraged the reorganization of management structures, provided resources and is a critical friend to support these ends.

The headteacher, who also has responsibility for Religious Education, leads through the example of her passionate commitment to the Catholic Faith and promotes a spiritual, tranquil and moral faith journey for the school, creating a shared evangelical vision based on the teaching of the Gospel and lived daily through hard work, devoted prayer, meditation and celebration. This spiritual tranquility then reaches out and enfolds all members of the community who value the varied opportunities and experiences they receive which enhance their own faith journey. Spirituality underpins the unity of purpose displayed by every member of the school staff and is a significant strength. St Mary's Catholic School is a community wherein relationships are very strong and morale is very high. The example set by all adults impacts on the pupils whose behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary.

Strong links exist with parents and the parish to reinforce the high standard of care, guidance and support the school provides to ensure its pupils' safety and general well-being. The many positive initiatives promote the spiritual and moral development of the pupils of the highest quality. The school enjoys strong links with St John Fisher High School where the majority of the pupils continue their education. Parents commented about the termly family Masses held in the Parish where all children and their families take an active part. Other comments from parents included: 'recognize needs of all, 'family issues are dealt with sensitively and respectfully allowing pupils to share their feelings openly,' and 'even if a child struggles academically they always find something they can shine at.' The Parish priest is a regular visitor to the school, knowing each child by name and his influence is appreciated by all members of the community being a friend to each one. He has facilitated the further development of the spiritual life of the whole school community, thereby further raising their self-esteem and confidence. Comments were consistent in extolling his virtues, 'Father George is a gift from God. He has a certain magic, a powerful contribution to the community.'

The inclusion of all is a central goal and a shared vision. Governors and staff work to ensure that pupils are given opportunities to enter into dialogue and solve their individual problems. The Travelling community have great trust in the school and appreciate how welcome they feel in the

school. Within the school, there is concern, respect and hospitality towards each other. Broader provision for RE results in an attitude of respect for other world faiths and pupils are gaining an increasing awareness of the beliefs and values of others. Pupils demonstrate a lively awareness that they are members of one human family responsible for one another. They participate in neighbourhood community activities which bring them close to people on the margins of society and those who suffer.

This awareness of the needs of the individual and of the local community is manifest through many developing initiatives which bring pupils and their parents to a fuller awareness of Gospel values, enriched through the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.

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### **How good is the quality of Collective Worship?**

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The quality of Collective Worship at St Mary's is outstanding. Significant renewal in recent times through staff INSET and purchase of additional resources, endorses the fact that the prayer and liturgical life is regarded as central to the life of the school community. Vibrant acts of worship engage pupils' and staff interest and inspire deep thought and heartfelt response.

Acts of worship are well planned, show progression and include a variety of prayer styles and settings consistently appropriate to the age and background of pupils. The planned programme is relevant to the liturgical year, adaptable to include other calendar events, and has regular opportunities for staff and pupils to evaluate its effectiveness. A range of resources is used to enrich and enhance Collective Worship. Discerning use of IT resources to create atmosphere in class-based worship impacts on pupils' readiness to reflect on and respond to the provision. There is an atmosphere of calm and peace in classrooms and throughout school. Every classroom has a prayer focus in addition to colourful and vibrant RE displays. All pupils are very familiar with a range of formal and informal prayers. They enjoy singing their praise to God.

Pupil participation is a normal expectation in Collective Worship and they are clearly used to having an active role in liturgy and prayer. The overall provision for Collective Worship, liturgy and prayer has a significant impact on their spiritual and moral development and is a major strength of the school.

The parish priest makes a strong contribution to the community and is well supported by the school's own structures. Parents and parishioners celebrate regularly with the school and there are many times when pupils contribute to parish celebrations. The successful Sacramental programme is seen as an active and close partnership involving home, parish and school. The Year 3 'Table of the Lord' celebration included all members of the class valuing the presence of those who are not of the Catholic faith.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

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### **How well do pupils achieve in RE?**

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The pupils' achievement in RE is good and all pupils make good progress during their time at St Mary's. Many pupils enter school in line with national expectation but are gaining knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate across all key stages and there is no evidence to suggest that any pupils under-perform. The school's strong commitment to inclusion means that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported in RE. Higher ability pupils need to be set more challenging targets and encouraged to further develop their questioning/answering skills.

The standard of oral, written and displayed work is good with some outstanding displays and the pupils take obvious pride and enjoyment in what they do. A range of pupil work indicates varied activities demanding good use of IT, focus on Scripture, involvement of parents, pupils' own prayers, creative and independent responses as well as those led by the teacher.

A rigorous approach to monitoring pupil attainment and progress will enhance an already varied and creative curriculum. Pupils are interested and responsive during RE lessons. Secure assessment procedures for RE are developing and the school has identified the need to moderate work matching the new Levels of Attainment in RE which will then be used with a data-backed prediction of future targets. The RE subject leader is committed in her determination to support staff development and encourage pupils as independent learners.

School Council members show considerable maturity in their discernment of school strengths and needs and the extent to which they know they can realistically effect change. They respect and love the school and feel greatly respected and loved in return.

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### **How effective are teaching and learning in RE?**

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The teaching of RE is good with many outstanding features. The teachers' subject knowledge, commitment, and teaching styles are ably supported and encouraged through exemplary leadership. The level of provision and challenge stretches pupils whilst ensuring that individual needs are met. Teachers challenge pupils to think spiritually, ethically and theologically, and to become aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

All teachers differentiate through planning and delivery. Pupil tasks are varied and clearly explained. All pupils are quietly engaged and remain on focus throughout the lesson. Pupils work effectively in pairs and small groups and are developing worthwhile skills as independent learners. They greatly enjoy their RE lessons and take a great pride in all they do. They are quietly confident and express themselves in a manner which demonstrates good subject knowledge and understanding.

RE is regarded by the school as the Core subject and is resourced as such.

Parents are informed and involved in promoting their child's development and understanding through regular newsletters regarding the RE curriculum. Parents gave very positive comments on the parent questionnaire.

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### **How well does the RE curriculum meet the needs and interests of pupils?**

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The curriculum in RE fulfils the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools. It is organised around the life and teaching of Jesus and the Church, and the beliefs, celebrations and way of life of Catholics who follow that teaching. All pupils irrespective of age and ability are able to make progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding and to learn to think spiritually, ethically and theologically, and to become aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

Support staff play a key role in supporting the teaching and learning of RE, ensuring that all pupils enjoy positive peer and adult relationships in school and in ensuring that individual needs are met. The progress made by the pupils is consistent in the year to year progression.

The provision for education in personal relationships is strong and parents are happy with the provision.

The provision for teaching and learning about other world faiths is good. Pupils are developing a balanced understanding and appreciation of these through the taught curriculum and independent study. The broader RE curriculum makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. Pupils of other faiths in the school are encouraged to share their faith eg a Jewish child took part in an assembly and shared her beliefs and traditions. The family were involved in preparing a file explaining the rites of the Passover in child friendly terminology.

## How effective are Leadership and Management in raising achievement and supporting all pupils in RE?

The overall leadership and management of RE is outstanding and the school is fortunate in having a subject leader whose direction and support leading to improvement are exemplary. The leadership of the subject is strongly focused on the school's Catholic mission, on raising standards and promoting the faith development of pupils. Records of planning, monitoring, evaluation and assessment are in place. New members of staff are supported and given appropriate training to enable them to fulfill their role effectively.

Governors take an active role in being a critical friend in the life of the school and more formal monitoring procedures are developing. As this develops the Governors will deepen their understanding of and have a clearer insight into the demands and requirements of the RE curriculum in this Catholic school. The Governors follow a self evaluation of their strengths in order to carry out their role effectively.

The high quality support afforded by the subject leader ensures that a shared sense of mission has been established among all staff. Development needs are accurately identified and tackled energetically. The subject is managed very efficiently and, through its quality assurance procedures, has a well-grounded understanding of the quality of its provision.

The inclusion of all pupils is central to its vision through its belief that all are created in the image of God. It is effective in pursuing this. Good links exist with parents, parishes and diocesan agencies to support work in RE. The impact is seen in the good progress made by all pupils.

### SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<b>OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS</b>	<b>1</b>	Outstanding
<b>THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL</b>		
<i>How effective are Leadership and Management in developing the Catholic life of the school?</i>	<b>1</b>	Outstanding
<i>How good is the quality of Collective Worship?</i>	<b>1</b>	Outstanding
<b>RELIGIOUS EDUCATION</b>		
<i>How well do pupils achieve in RE?</i>	<b>2</b>	Good
<i>How effective are Teaching and learning in RE?</i>	<b>1</b>	Outstanding
<i>How well does the RE curriculum meet the needs and interests of pupils?</i>	<b>2</b>	Good
<i>How effective are Leadership and Management in raising achievement and supporting all pupils in RE?</i>	<b>1</b>	Outstanding