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DIOCESAN BOARD FOR INSPECTIONS

CANON LAW 806 FINAL INSPECTION REPORT INCORPORATING SECTION 48

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

**ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
A VOLUNTARY ACADEMY**
Tentergate Road, Knaresborough HG5

School URN

8153371

Date of Inspection and OE
grade

March 8th & 9th 2017
Grade: Outstanding

E-mail address

admin@st-marys.n-yorks.sch.uk

Chair of Governors

Paul Jackson

Headteacher

Executive Headteacher: Alison Ashworth
Head of School: Helen Tomlinson

RE Subject Leader

Helen Tomlinson

Date and grade of last S48
inspection

March 2012 Grade: Good

Section 48 Inspector/s

Mr M.J. Gallagher

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection Grades: 1 is Outstanding, 2 is Good, 3 requires improvement in order to be good, 4 is Inadequate

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS: how effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

1

The above judgement on overall effectiveness is based on all the available evidence following the evaluation of:

- *Outcomes for pupils,*
- *The provision for Catholic Education*
- *Leaders and Managers*

OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

1

THE PROVISION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

2

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

1

Summary of key findings:

This is an outstanding Catholic primary school

- The inspirational executive headteacher supported by the experienced head of school have established a learning environment where everyone, adults and children, are valued and respected. The mission statement, 'With Christ at the centre we show, Unity, Respect, Joy, Love, Courage', guides every aspect of life in St Mary's.
- The rigorous systems in place for monitoring, evaluating and challenging all areas of school life, including Religious Education, are instrumental in the raising of standards across the school.
- Parents recognise the work school leaders have done to raise the standards of teaching and learning in all subjects, including Religious Education, and appreciate that this is achieved in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- They support school leaders' efforts in further developing the Catholic life of the school and raising the standards of teaching and learning in Religious Education. In discussion they referred to the Mission Statement to emphasise points made.
- School governors are astute. Having made the decision to appoint an executive headteacher they have been rewarded by rapid improvements throughout the school in a relatively short period. They are also aware of the advantages of being members of the Bishop Wheeler Trust.
- Pupils are a delight; they are happy, inquisitive, hard-working and open. They care for each other and are very aware about keeping themselves and others safe. They have excellent relationships with the adults in school creating a friendly and relaxed atmosphere in which they all make progress. Their contribution to the Catholic life of the School is outstanding.
- The teaching of Religious Education is at least good with some of it outstanding. Teachers plan their lessons efficiently and effectively. They use a range of approaches

to engage pupils in their learning. Assessment procedures are very effective especially the marking of pupils' books.

- Provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities is outstanding. School leaders have done their utmost to train staff and provide appropriate accommodation to address the needs of pupils with complex issues. The inclusion of these pupils has been so successful that everyone in St Mary's benefits from them.
- Support staff are skilled in supporting all pupils but especially those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities and their contribution to the school is outstanding.
- The school has close links with the parish; it has representatives on the parish council and the parish priest is very supportive of school leaders.

What the school needs to do to improve further.

- Raise standards of teaching and learning throughout the school by sharing existing outstanding practice so that the majority of lessons observed will be outstanding.
- Consider developing cross curricular links between Religious Education and English where, especially for the more able, pupils might have the opportunity to use their literacy skills to produce extended and more sophisticated pieces of writing for Religious Education.
- Continue developing pupils' skills in preparing and leading Collective Worship.

Information about this inspection

The Inspection of St Mary's 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 Diocesan Administrator of Leeds. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule follows the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA 2012).

During the inspection the inspector observed parts of Religious Education lessons in all the classes, from the Early Years to Year 6 and 2 acts of worship, both held in classrooms at the beginning of lessons. Discussions were held with the parish priest accompanied by a school governor; with a group of parents; the recently elected Chair of Governors accompanied by his predecessor and the governor responsible for Religious Education; Mini Vinnies representatives; the school council and a number of meetings with the executive head teacher and the head of school. In addition to the school's Self Evaluation Document, the School Development Plan, the previous Section 48 report and reports from external sources, made available to the inspector prior to the inspection, the school presented documentation detailing the monitoring and evaluation of teaching of Religious Education and of Collective Worship, the tracking of pupils' progress, pupils' books for scrutiny and the Religious Education subject leader's file.

The inspector reviewed in detail the following aspects:

- The extent to which pupils contribute and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.
- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

- How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship.
- The quality of teaching and marking and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education
- The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate provision and plan improvements.

Information about this school

- St Mary's is a Voluntary Catholic Academy primary school serving the town of Knaresborough.
- There have been significant changes in St Mary's since its previous diocesan inspection in 2012.
- The school converted into an academy in July 2015 and is a member of the Bishop Wheeler Academy Trust.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in March 2016 for St Mary's and St Joseph's in Harrogate.
- There are currently 200 pupils on roll, 73% of whom are Catholic.
- The majority of pupils have English as their first language with a small number from the European mainland and from India.
- The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is 11.5%, which is above the national average. Seven pupils have an Educational Health Plan.
- 9% of pupils are from the travelling community.
- With 19 pupils entering the Reception Class in September 2016, below the Admission Number of 30, and a repeat of this expected by the school for September 2017, there is an indication of a declining roll. School leaders are currently planning strategies to deal with a possible future falling roll, a situation common with the majority of primary schools in Knaresborough.
- There are 8 full time teachers, 3 part time and 20 support staff. Five of the teachers are Catholic and 2 hold the Catholic Certificate for Religious Education.

Full report - inspection judgements

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils are outstanding

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| The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school. | 1 |
| How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education. | 1 |
| How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship. | 1 |

- Pupils across the school lead and take responsibility for shaping religious activities in the school and the wider community. They are confident, charming, enthusiastic and very proud of their school. They were able to give examples of how school life related to each of the words, 'Unity, Respect, Joy, Love and Courage', central to the school's Mission Statement.

- Relationships within the school are outstanding; pupils valued the guidance they receive from school staff in developing their social, moral and cultural knowledge. They are aware of the vulnerabilities of the very young children in their school and describe how it is their duty to look after them and keep them safe
- Pupils are eager to take responsibility in leading the Catholic Life of the school. The Mini Vinnies were enthusiastic in describing their current project; making cards for distribution to the sick and lonely of the parish, details that they gleaned from the weekly parish bulletin, while they also focused on the practicalities of ensuring the safety of the very young on a future sponsored walk in aid of the 'Good Shepherd'.
- Pupils discussed, at length, the importance of the Mini Vinnies as the work they did was in the service of people who needed their help and support.
- They were very aware of being safe and were familiar with the different types of bullying especially in this digital age. They appreciated the advice and support given to them by the school that keeps them safe.
- Attainment by pupils in Religious Education is consistently high at the end of each key stage. The school follows the diocesan Religious Education programme, The Way, the Truth and the Life. As a subject, Religious Education has a high profile in the school and school leaders, rightly, maintain its core subject position and value by ensuring that standards achieved by pupils in Religious Education are at least equal to those achieved in English and Mathematics.
- School leaders ensure all groups of pupils within the school make progress. They do this through a comprehensive system of pupil tracking where individuals who are falling behind are identified and appropriate support targeted and, by regular monitoring of teaching and learning in classrooms and the frequent scrutiny of pupils' work books.
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or with disabilities also make good progress. School leaders have gone to great lengths to meet their needs by providing appropriate training for support staff and appropriate accommodation within the building to accommodate their needs.
- This has had a positive impact on all pupils as they all benefit from the extra support in classroom. It was evident on a number of occasions during the inspection when support staff were at hand to help pupils with their work and to intervene in order to keep individuals on task. Evidence from a recent local authority report also states that, '...education of other pupils is not being adversely affected by pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities'.
- The contribution made by the support staff to the development and welfare of the pupils of St Mary's is outstanding and is the embodiment of the school's mission.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary; they are enthusiastic in their lessons and have the greatest respect for one another.
- Collective Worship is at the centre of the work of St Mary's and pupils benefit hugely from it. One parent stated that, 'the Collective Worship in St Mary's is fundamental in developing (pupils') own prayer life'.
- Pupils were reflective during Collective Worship observed, they used both formal and informal prayers, listened to and reflected upon a range of scripture reading and left with a mission to achieve.
- All the acts of Collective Worship observed were age appropriate: in the Early Years the atmosphere was calm and inviting created by the gentle Taize background music; the box on the focal point held the 'Alleluia' until the end of Lent and the children went forth with the mission, 'to smile'. In Year 5 pupils assembled the focal point explaining the relevance of the artefacts used and later, through discussion, reflected on how they, as individuals, might change during Lent.

The provision for Catholic Education is good

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| The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education. | 2 |
| The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning. | 1 |
| The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school. | 2 |

- The quality of teaching is at least good with some of it outstanding. There was no inadequate teaching observed by the inspector during this inspection.
- Where teaching is outstanding time is expertly managed by the class teacher, tasks match pupils' ability and all pupils are active and engaged in their learning.
- All teachers show they have good subject knowledge enabling them to inspire their pupils and move them forward in their learning. Pupils, on the other hand, have an excellent relationship with their teachers and are confident to ask questions. This was evident, on a number of occasions, when pupils asked their teacher for clarification of what was required from them in relation to the tasks set.
- All pupils make good progress, a result of good assessment procedures. 'I Can' statements are used to inform pupils where they are in their learning and the future steps they need to take in order to progress. Workbooks are regularly marked, in line with the school's policy, with constructive feedback given and an expectation that the pupils respond, in writing, to that feedback. The marking policy is applied consistently throughout the school.
- Information technology is used effectively and enhances the teaching and learning throughout the school. All teachers used interactive whiteboards efficiently, tablets are used in the Early Years to record children at work and older pupils described how they used computers for research.
- Adults in St Mary's have high expectations for all pupils. Senior leaders have set the expectations high and through rigorous monitoring and assessment systems ensure that staff and pupils meet these standards.
- Long standing parents commented on the development of teaching and learning in Religious Education in St Mary's over recent years and the standards achieved by pupils. They said that presently Collective Worship has the highest priority in the school and pupils have more opportunities to lead it. The Religious Education curriculum has a much deeper theological content now and as a result pupils have a greater sense of mission. Because of the high expectation by senior leaders in Religious Education their children were becoming more literate. They recognised and appreciated the care and support given to vulnerable pupils and the efforts made to keep all pupils safe. Evidence from the inspection would support these opinions.
- Planning for delivering the Religious Education curriculum is in line with diocesan guidelines but the school has now adapted them to match the needs of their pupils.
- Senior leaders recognise and value the advantages gained from being a member of the Bishop Wheeler's Trust and having an executive headteacher with an able head of school.
- Senior leaders carefully monitor teachers' planning ensuring that the required 10% of teaching time that should be allocated to Religious Education is happening in all classes. The school meets the requirements of the Bishop's Conference and is fully responsive to the requirements of the Diocese of Leeds.
- The parish priest is a welcome and frequent visitor to the school. He oversees the sacramental life of the school, celebrating Mass in the school hall, providing opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, taking weekly assemblies and being a vital link between the parish and school.

- Key stage 2 classes take in turn to attend Mass in the parish church on Wednesday mornings joining parishioners in the celebration.
- Preparation for First Communion takes place in the parish but it is complemented in the school through the Religious Education curriculum. This will also be the case for Confirmation preparation when it is introduced for Year 6 pupils in the near future.
- Staff regularly review and plan improvements to the school's provision of Collective Worship. Evidence in the Religious Education subject leader's file show that Collective Worship is observed regularly by school leaders and recommendations for improvements made. However, although there was evidence of pupils preparing and planning their own liturgies, throughout the school in the file, this practice is not yet sufficiently embedded to show independence.
- Pupils have an excellent awareness of the Church's liturgical year and its associated celebrations. The colours on the prayer focus table in each of the classroom change to reflect the current season.
- Prayer is central to the school's work and pupils are confident in using formal and informal forms. There is a prayer garden in the school grounds and quiet area for reflection in an interior courtyard available to all pupils.
- In addition to the work of the Mini Vinnies pupils are proud to support charities for example Cafod, Cancer Research and Barnardo's by raising money through coffee mornings and Smartie Swaps. By doing so they enhance the common good and personal spiritual development of all.

The Leadership and Management are outstanding

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| How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Catholic Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils. | 1 |
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- There is clear evidence from discussions with school leaders and governors, the documentation examined and from the time spent in the school that the commitment to the Catholic mission of St Mary's is a priority.
- School leaders have created a bright and exciting learning environment for the pupils. Prominent in the building are the 5 brightly printed boards in the school hall proclaiming to all the school's mission with explanations, by pupils, so their message is made clear to everyone.
- School leaders have a crystal clear vision of where they see the school in both the short and long term, and have achieved so much already in such a short time. Parents interviewed agreed that the school was always good but the recently appointed executive headteacher has made it, 'amazingly better'.
- Surrounded by a team of talented and hard-working teachers with outstanding support staff, an experienced and knowledgeable governing body within the Bishop Wheeler Trust, it's the executive headteacher that is the catalyst in the school's recent improvement.
- The rigorous systems introduced for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is clearly raising standards. An example of the extent of the rigour is the scrutiny of pupils' work books every three weeks ensuring that the marking and feedback policy is adhered to.

- The head of school plays a crucial role in supporting the executive headteacher in realising the vision. She manages the day to day business effectively and has led the Religious Education curriculum to its present outstanding position.
- Governors are well informed through detailed and honest reports from the executive headteacher . They are clear in their view of where the school's strengths are and have plans to address the weaknesses.
- Even with present financial restraints spaces have been created for those pupils who need 'time out' when space is at a premium.
- There is no doubt that school leaders at St Mary's face many challenges on a daily basis. These can be financial, lack of space within the building, possible future falling roll, pupil behaviour especially where there are complex medical issues, but school leaders do not see any problems here, only solutions.