



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 112898

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Hallam

22 January 2026 – 23 January 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education RE

Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

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Yes

Yes

Fully

What the school does well

Leaders, including governors, are dedicated to their role in leading this outstanding Catholic school, striving for excellence in all areas.

High quality pastoral care ensures that the wellbeing of pupils, their families and staff is consistently and carefully prioritised.

Relationships are strong and warm at all levels across the school community.

Pupil behaviour in religious education lessons, and around the school, is exemplary.

A beautiful sacred space has been created, reflecting the centrality of prayer and liturgy at St Mary's.

What the school needs to improve

In religious education, provide pupils with relevant and specific feedback to ensure that they clearly understand what they need to do to make progress in their learning.

Design tasks in religious education lessons that help pupils to produce, with consistency, pieces of work which match the depth of their verbal responses.

Ensure that pupils understand the wide variety of ways of praying within the Catholic tradition.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

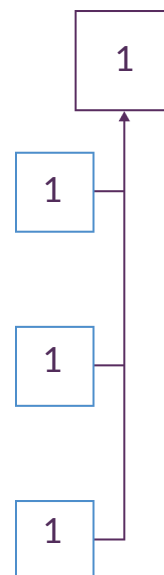
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

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



Pupils are incredibly proud to belong to the St Mary's school community - and they are a credit to the school. Pupils share their understanding of the school's mission, to 'let your light shine' and are particularly articulate when enthusiastically explaining what this means and how they let their own lights shine: 'We follow the rules, but you can be yourself' and, in reference to the mission motto, 'The light is Jesus and God, and we want to be more like them'. Pupils demonstrate exemplary behaviour in and around the school, showing care and respect for all. They explain the importance and privilege of looking after those who are new to the school, demonstrating their understanding of and contribution to a culture of welcome: 'Everyone wants to meet ... new contacts and new friends, which I think is really good'. Pupils are knowledgeable about the school values, saying that, 'every term there is a new value to show - like peace and solidarity. It shows us what Jesus would do'. Pupils who exemplify each value are celebrated through the Golden Children assemblies, to which parents are invited. One parent commented that their child is 'growing into a polite young man with a strong moral compass because of the ethos of this Catholic school'.

The school's mission is well known and understood, and staff bear witness to this in their daily work. The sense of community and culture of welcome within the school is palpable, and there is an overwhelming sense that the Holy Spirit is at work here. Staff are role models in how they relate to pupils, one another and the wider community. As a result, pastoral care is a school strength, since there is a deep commitment to providing for the most vulnerable and maintaining the dignity of each person. Parents appreciate this, saying, 'Beyond the classroom, there is a tangible sense of community that makes the school feel incredibly

welcoming. It is clear that the school's mission goes beyond academics, as they successfully prioritise teaching the children how to be genuinely kind and respectful to one another'. The provision for relationship and health education, and for personal development, is well thought-out and reflects the teachings of the Catholic Church, preparing pupils well for the next stage in life.

Leaders, including governors, are ambitious in their quest to ensure that the Catholic life and mission of the school is not only known, but lived. As a result, leaders at all levels look for ways they can provide opportunities for pupils to 'live life to the full' and recognise their God-given skills and talents, 'leading them to be what God wants them to be'. Examples of this can be seen in the caring words shared in the Golden Children assemblies, and through weekly 'Shine Time' sessions, Catholic social teaching (CST) awards, and observing interactions between different members of the school community. The majority of parents are overwhelmingly positive about the Catholic life and mission of the school, with 96% reporting that they understand and support it. A typical comment from a parent supports this view: 'The mission and values of the school are truly lived out in every experience for the children and community'.

Religious education

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

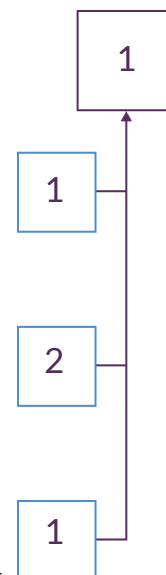
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Pupils are highly engaged during religious education lessons. They typically say, 'Lessons are fun!' and 'religious education inspires me because it helps me to understand the bible'. Pupils are attentive to their teachers, listen carefully to the contributions of their peers, and show an exemplary attitude towards their learning. This enables them to make best use of time in lessons, where they diligently follow instructions, share their ideas willingly, and recognise the importance of hard work. Verbal responses from pupils are impressive. They can remember and articulate religious knowledge very well, though this is not always fully reflected in written pieces of work. This is because pupils are not clear about exactly what they do, or could do, to improve their recorded work, such as making a range of links between scripture, prayer and life. However, pupils consistently demonstrate the ability to work very well both collaboratively and independently, showing thoughtful respect and interest in the ideas of others when working with a partner or as part of a group.

Teachers have high expectations in religious education lessons. They are developing strong subject knowledge and are open to all professional development opportunities offered to them. Teachers follow an agreed and consistent lesson format: as a result, lessons across the school are well paced, and cover a range of activities to help pupils build knowledge and skills, particularly through discussion. In the best lessons, teaching assistants are pro-active in their support in order to meet the needs of all learners. A highlight of lessons is the quality of questioning used by teachers, which leads to rich discussion. However, few opportunities are taken by teachers to offer concrete advice about next steps in learning or devise specific tasks

to draw upon and extend thinking, which restricts pupils' written outcomes in their workbooks. Although parents are not always clear how well their child is doing in religious education, they are pleased that, 'religious education ... is clearly delivered with high expectations and deep insight, allowing children to engage meaningfully with faith'.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that religious education has full parity with other core curriculum subjects. They ensure that religious education accurately reflects the demands of the _Religious Education Directory _and that resources enhance the delivery of this subject in classrooms across the school. The subject leaders have an inspiring vision for religious education and are unwavering in their support for staff colleagues; the professional development they provide is strong and thorough, which means that teachers and teaching assistants are developing their subject knowledge, skills and confidence continually. One teacher commented that, when asking senior leaders for advice or support, 'nothing is too much trouble'. Curriculum design is a high priority for leaders and, though at an early stage, work is emerging which links Catholic social teaching to the wider Catholic curriculum and into other academic subjects. Monitoring and evaluation processes help leaders, including governors, to be sure that religious education is taught using a range of approaches, such as through drama, art and in-depth discussion. Leaders are not afraid to adapt and change their thinking and strategic action in the search for excellence.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

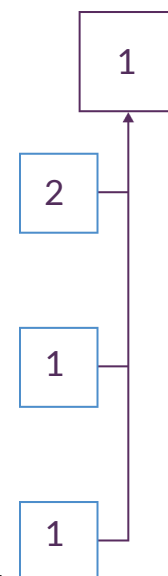
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship



Pupils are interested in and committed to prayer and liturgy. They enjoy coming together to pray, recognising the peace it brings at a number of points during a busy school day. When participating in times of prayer led by others, pupils are respectful, attentive and calm. Although they cannot always recall the theme of a celebration of the word, or explain its significance, they can articulate how times of prayer and reflection make a positive impact on their lives. Moreover, they can speak about this eloquently, for example explaining that prayer, 'gives us the courage to speak to God, and we can call out to Jesus if we need him'. Most pupils sing well and take advantage of quiet periods to pray and reflect. Pupils enjoy being actively involved in planning and leading celebrations of the word: they know which elements to include, but the flow between these aspects can be stilted as they develop confidence in reading aloud, asking peers to answer questions and provide instruction for communal actions. Pupils are at an early stage of mastering the sequential skills which staff have set out for their age groups in relation to planning and leading prayer and liturgy. Chaplaincy team members relish the responsibility of leading other, and younger, pupils in prayer, for example during lunchtime prayer club in the sacred space. They give their time freely, witnessing their faith by 'helping others to become closer to God'.

The school environment is beautiful throughout, but the sacred space is really special. This high standard reflects the centrality of prayer at St Mary's. A daily pattern of prayer is well established, with traditional prayers featuring alongside carefully chosen passages of scripture, in keeping with the liturgical calendar and season of the Catholic Church. Staff model good practice to pupils, though the richness of tradition is sometimes narrow. In the

best examples, staff allow pupils to relax into their roles a little, and show their creativity, rather than scaffolding celebrations of the word too heavily. Staff are fully committed to engaging pupils in faith development as they move through the school, explaining that, 'We hope they use scripture and our teaching of values to make a smooth transition to high school, so they feel confident to make informed choices to guide them independently'.

Leaders are models of excellence in their own practice, inspiring pupils, colleagues and parents alike. They live their faith joyfully and, together with governors, share this with the school community with ease. Most staff find that the policy on prayer and liturgy is useful to them; they have access to a range of resources which leaders have devised to enable them to, in turn, support pupils during times of prayer and reflection. The school calendar has been planned to ensure that there are regular opportunities for pupils to attend Mass: some parents would welcome even more opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist, in school and in church. Leaders and governors work hard to maintain and develop strong links with the parish; in turn, the parish priest and parishioners are keen to participate in this partnership, even when time is in short supply: their willingness to see the school and parish as one worshipping community, alongside leaders and governors, is clearly evident.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	112898
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8303502
Full postal address of the school	Cross Street, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S40 4ST
School phone number	01246 232170
Executive Headteacher	
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Nicola Brown
Chair of Governors	Mr Mario Santoro
School Website	www.st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	
Age-range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	6 June 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

Fionuala Anne Boucher	Lead
Lucy Saxton	Team

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement