



# St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

URN: 119651

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

12–12 November 2025

## 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

2

#### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Fully

2

## Compliance statement

- The school meets the 10% requirement of teaching religious education, as laid down by the Bishop's Conference.
- The bishop of Salford has no additional requirements for primary schools.
- The school has fully responded to all previous areas for improvement.

## What the school does well

- Children at the school feel valued, nurtured, and supported by all staff, with inclusivity being a clear strength of the community.
- School leaders have a deep understanding of their setting and are focused on the actions required to continue driving improvement.
- The headteacher and subject leader provide inspirational leadership, modelling high standards and demonstrating unwavering commitment to Catholic education.
- Governors are a key strength of the school, showing dedication, expertise, and active engagement in fulfilling their roles effectively.

## What the school needs to improve

- Continue implementing the new religious education scheme, fostering creativity through targeted staff training, ongoing monitoring, and the sharing of best practice.
- Embed the new mission statement so that it is fully lived, ensuring it is consistently referenced in decision-making, curriculum planning, and displays.

## 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

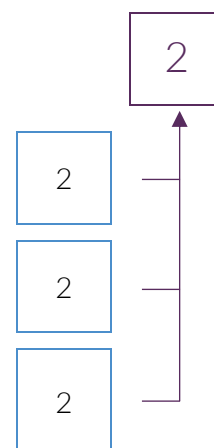
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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



St Mary's is a warm and welcoming school with a recently reviewed mission statement. This statement, *With Jesus in our hearts, we welcome, we learn, we laugh, we flourish*, underpins the school's ethos. It guides children and staff in mutual support and collaboration. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the mission. They confidently explained its meaning in their daily lives. Governors clearly described how the mission was developed. Children recognise that every individual is unique and made in the image and likeness of God. They value one another's qualities and understand the importance of supporting those in need. Through charitable activities, such as the harvest collection for the Ribble Valley Food Bank, pupils learn to follow Jesus' example by helping those less fortunate. Pupils described how they welcome new classmates and ensure everyone feels included. They also spoke with enthusiasm about the newly introduced Cafod characters for Catholic social teaching. They were eager to learn more about the links to key principles. Behaviour across the school is consistently good. Pupils are accepting, respectful, and supportive, especially of those with additional needs. To develop further, the school must deepen pupils' theological understanding of Catholic social teaching.

All staff actively uphold the school's ethos and Catholic life. They demonstrate a caring, loving, and nurturing approach towards pupils and their families. Their commitment reinforces the school's values and creates an environment where every child feels valued and supported. Staff consistently embed the mission across all aspects of school life. They engage in ongoing formation to deepen their understanding of Catholic teaching. Staff also work closely with external agencies to ensure all pupils can access learning effectively. Each classroom includes a dedicated worship and reflection area. The school's outdoor prayer space supports quiet contemplation and connection with nature. Children are enthusiastic about plans to develop this

area further. The school environment clearly reflects its Catholic identity. There is strong pastoral care and a deep commitment to supporting vulnerable pupils. The headteacher's inspirational leadership ensures staff serve as excellent role models. This fosters a warm, family atmosphere. Children feel genuinely cared for and can articulate the love shown by adults. One pupil commented, 'The best thing about this school is the laughter!' The school delivers its relationships, sex, and health education curriculum through the *Life to the Full* programme, adapting content appropriately.

The recent review of the mission statement was positively received by staff, children, and governors. This shows good collaboration among key stakeholders. Governors spoke knowledgeably about their role in developing the Catholic School Evaluation Document (CSED). They acknowledged that Catholic life and mission continue to be important to their work. The mission is regularly revisited and referenced across the community. Senior leaders maintain a supportive partnership with the parish. The parish priest is a frequent and welcome presence in school, contributing to a shared sense of Catholic identity. Governance, led by an experienced chair, provides effective support and appropriate challenge. This promotes ongoing improvement in Catholic life and mission. Staff reported receiving good professional and personal support. This positively influences their well-being. It also helps them act as positive role models who promote the school's Catholic ethos. The growing in faith together (GIFT) team is regularly consulted. This allows pupils to express their views and contribute to school life. Pupils spoke confidently about their roles and responsibilities. This reflects a collaborative and inclusive ethos within the school community. While the mission statement is known and valued by staff, pupils, and governors, the school could develop its impact further by ensuring it is more consistently and visibly embedded in every aspect of school life. Focused development would help the mission move beyond being a known statement to becoming a dynamic, lived reality.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

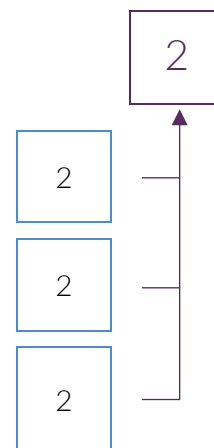
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



With the recent introduction of the diocesan recommended scheme of work, pupils at St Mary's are steadily developing secure knowledge, skills, and understanding in religious education, aligned with the learning requirements set out in the *Religious Education Directory*. Pupils demonstrate keen interest and enthusiasm for exploring their faith, showing genuine curiosity about the Catholic tradition as well as the beliefs of others. They speak confidently about their learning and proudly share their books, which reflect high standards comparable to English, incorporating diverse presentation styles, scripture references, and inclusive materials accessible to all learners. Pupils are increasingly able to identify their next steps, supported by systematic use of assessments that inform future planning and promote significant progress. Behaviour for learning is strong, and pupils' enjoyment of religious education is evident in the quality of their work. The school's commitment to inclusivity ensures every child is supported to make good progress from their individual starting points, with attainment in religious education generally in line with other core subjects. To advance further, the school should focus on deepening pupils' religious literacy by encouraging fluent use of key concepts and subject-specific vocabulary, fostering greater spiritual reflection, ethical thinking, and promoting increased independence and creativity in their learning.

St Mary's provides a well-structured and comprehensive religious education curriculum that meets the requirements set by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The curriculum is thoughtfully planned to ensure progression in knowledge, understanding, and skills across all key stages. Teachers deliver lessons with confidence and a clear understanding of the religious education curriculum, creating a learning environment where children feel encouraged to explore and deepen their faith. The school's approach to assessment in religious education is robust, with regular monitoring and tracking of pupil progress. This ensures

teaching is responsive to the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, and disadvantaged children, enabling them to achieve good outcomes. During the inspection, a variety of teaching strategies, including discussion and creative activities, engaged pupils actively in their learning and supported their spiritual and moral development. Resources were well-chosen and effectively support curriculum delivery, including digital and tangible materials that bring religious education themes to life. Staff benefit from ongoing professional development, which enhances their subject knowledge and pedagogical skills, contributing to the overall quality of provision. The school's religious education curriculum is enriched through meaningful links with the Catholic life and mission of the school, including participation in liturgies, prayer services, and community outreach activities. These experiences deepen pupils' understanding of Catholic social teaching and their role as active members of the Church community.

Leaders and governors at St Mary's ensure the diocesan recommended scheme of work fully aligns with the *Religious Education Directory*, securing a curriculum that is both faithful and ambitious. Monitoring by the headteacher and subject leader is rigorous and ongoing, fostering continuous improvement in teaching quality and pupil outcomes. religious education is afforded parity with other core subjects through appropriate resourcing, timetabling, and a learning environment that visibly reflects its significance. The subject leader demonstrates strong expertise and commitment, acting as a role model who inspires reflective practice and curriculum evaluation to maintain relevance and impact. Collaboration with the diocese and the Catholic school community ensures timely adoption of initiatives and professional development tailored to enhance subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. Staff benefit from mentoring, monitoring, and coaching that uphold high standards. Curriculum design thoughtfully addresses the challenges of mixed-age classes, ensuring coherence and progression that meet diverse learner needs. Findings from regular monitoring are shared with the senior leadership team and governors, who actively engage in evaluation and accountability, driving high expectations and sustained improvement.

## 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

2

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

#### Leadership

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

2

2

Pupils of all ages respond positively to class opportunities for the Celebration of the Word. They actively participate in planning and delivering these celebrations, demonstrating confidence, willingness, and familiarity. Pupils are encouraged to collaborate, leading prayers for their peers in age-appropriate ways. All classes feature a focal point, providing opportunities for quiet reflection, and pupils sing with enthusiasm. Most pupils feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings during prayer. The use of scripture, music, and symbols enriches the experiences, deepening pupils' spiritual engagement. In every Celebration of the Word observed, pupils showed evident respect and attentiveness, creating a calm, reflective atmosphere conducive to prayer. The GIFT team spoke proudly about their role in planning prayers for Friday assemblies and special services throughout the year. Pupils also actively participate in evaluating class prayer and liturgy, offering constructive feedback and ideas for development. Class prayer focus areas reflect the liturgical calendar and are prominently displayed in classrooms, reinforcing the school's Catholic identity and supporting ongoing opportunities for prayer and reflection. These celebrations foster collaboration, spiritual growth, and a strong sense of community among pupils.

At St Mary's, prayer is at the heart of the community, bringing everyone closer together. The school has a structured plan for prayer and liturgy across the school, ensuring it is respected and valued by all. The school maintains a well-established daily pattern of prayer, in which pupils participate with reverence and respect. Key moments in the church's calendar are recognised and celebrated through a variety of prayer experiences. Pupils are encouraged to write their own prayers, which are used alongside traditional prayers in Celebrations of the Word. A clear structure for these celebrations has been implemented, giving pupils confidence to plan and lead prayer collaboratively. Seasonally appropriate scripture is central to all school prayer,

reinforcing the Catholic faith and liturgical understanding. Pupils understand a range of ways of praying within the Catholic tradition, such as scripture reading, silence, meditation, and communal singing. Recent training in prayer and liturgy has increased staff confidence, enabling them to support pupils in planning and leading their own sessions. This fosters a sense of ownership, engagement, and active participation in spiritual life. The school maintains strong links with the parish and its sister school, collaborating regularly. The annual provision plan includes Masses and services that reflect the liturgical year and key feast days, ensuring pupils experience the full rhythm of Catholic worship. At St Mary's, prayer is inclusive, well-structured, and deeply embedded, promoting reflection, spiritual growth, and community.

The school's policy for prayer and liturgy is well-formulated and effective. Leaders have a strong understanding of the different levels of pupil participation and have developed a clear skills progression for collective worship. This framework supports staff in planning and delivery, enabling them to guide pupils confidently in leading and engaging with worship. Pupils have a good understanding of the elements needed to create a prayer space and host a meaningful worship session, enhancing their spiritual and social development. The religious education leader champions collective worship, ensuring provision across the school is consistently of high quality. The headteacher and religious education lead collaborate closely to plan the collective worship calendar, including holy days, special occasions, and celebrations of saints, particularly St Mary and St Hubert. This partnership ensures staff feel supported, gaining the skills and confidence to plan and lead worship effectively in their classes. Senior leaders regularly monitor collective worship to ensure prayer and liturgy are engaging, meaningful, and accessible to all pupils. Pupils demonstrate familiarity with the routines and sequence of worship, participating with confidence and understanding. Overall, the school provides a coherent, inclusive, and high-quality collective worship experience, underpinned by strong leadership, structured progression, and active pupil engagement.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	119651
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8883753
Full postal address of the school	Watt Street, Sabden, Clitheroe, Lancashire, BB7 9ED
School phone number	01282771009
Executive headteacher	Claire Halstead
Headteacher	N/A
Chair of governors	Michael Mulrooney
School Website	<a href="http://www.stmaryssabden.co.uk/">http://www.stmaryssabden.co.uk/</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	20th April 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

## The inspection team

Marie Kwiatkowski  
Danielle Ellison

Lead  
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