



# St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

URN: 150561

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

26–27 February 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

1

#### 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 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 fully responded to the areas for improvement in the last inspection.

## What the school does well

- Authentic and passionate leadership is the driving force ensuring Christ is truly at the centre of St Mary's.
- Dedicated staff fully embrace the school's mission and enhance the powerful sense of community.
- Children are committed ambassadors of the faith living out the school's values in all they do.
- Religious education lessons are highly valued by the children and behaviour is exemplary.
- Prayer and liturgy is central to school life and the upmost reverence is given to the Word of God.

## What the school needs to improve

- Create a clear plan for the transition to and consistent implementation of the Religious Education Directory.
- Integrate a wider range of creative experiences in religious education to enrich children's learning.
- Rigorously implement the revised prayer and liturgy policy to ensure that child-led, planned, and evaluated worship becomes embedded practice across the whole school.

## 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**

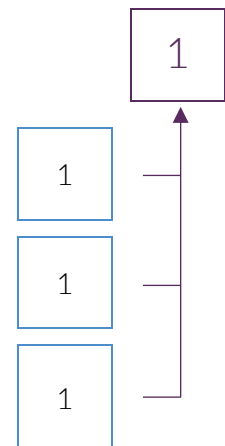
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

**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



The mission statement of St Mary's reflects the school's distinctive Catholic identity. It is clearly defined, regularly expressed, and deeply understood by all. The school is a vibrant, welcoming, and inclusive community where children feel loved, known, and cherished. Children demonstrate a clear sense of worth due to the ways in which they are celebrated as gifts from God. One child expressed 'I am in a Catholic school to grow my connection to God'. The numerous opportunities for children to undertake leadership roles lead to a palpable sense of community and collective responsibility. Understanding Catholic social teaching is secure as the children are immersed in their duty as missionary disciples. An example of this is the Caritas team visiting local care homes at Christmas explaining their goal as being 'Bringing the love to those who need it'. High levels of mutual respect have led to exemplary behaviour throughout school. The overwhelming majority of parents express that their children are happy and feel safe at St Mary's with one saying, 'My child is thriving, I couldn't ask for more'.

Staff wholeheartedly support the mission and speak passionately about their love of the school. They are impeccable role models and are highly valued by children and parents alike. The highest levels of pastoral care are provided to those who need it most and staff regularly go the extra mile to ensure all needs are met. One parent shared how appreciative they were of this stating, 'It is like a family; we are so privileged to be part of the school'. Children are absorbed in a culture of acceptance and forgiveness with one child saying, 'If we make a mistake teachers help us find the light'. All are welcomed warmly and lovingly to St Mary's. The school 'Saldete' (Welcome) group takes on responsibility for ensuring all new community members feel embraced. The physical environment has recently evolved to better reflect the Catholic character of St Mary's; an example being the newly displayed house saints elected by the children. This continues to be an area of focus for leaders. Children speak enthusiastically about how they live out the gospel values by supporting the community through an abundance of charitable initiatives.

Relationships, sex, and health education is carefully planned to fully reflect Catholic teaching and principles.

Leaders demonstrate an exceptional commitment to the Church's educational mission, ensuring that Christ is at the heart of all the school does. The expertise, authenticity, and vision of the executive headteacher have been instrumental in ensuring the mission of the school is lived, loved, and known. She is devotedly supported in her role by an inspirational and dedicated leader of Catholic life and mission who is seen as 'The pillar of the school community'. The newly formed local governing board provides extensive skills and knowledge to both support and challenge the leadership. They carry out their responsibilities with integrity and demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the strengths and areas for school development. Leaders ensure all policies and practices are rooted in the teachings of the gospel. Parents are readily welcomed into school and express that they feel listened to by the leadership. A unique and celebrated aspect of St Mary's is the glorious partnership between school and parish which was described by one parent as a 'Beautiful relationship'. The parish priest is a welcoming and joyful part of school life; children look forward to seeing him, parents are grateful for his presence, and staff view him as an integral part of the school family.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

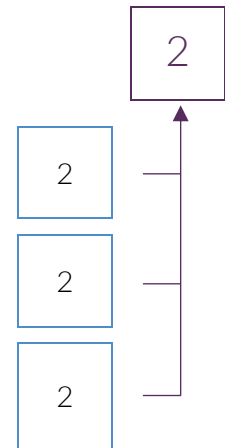
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



Children enjoy their religious education lessons, showing high levels of engagement and contributing well when liberated to do so. They make good progress, know more, and remember more because of the well-sequenced approach to the curriculum. They enjoy discussing their learning and can articulate their knowledge using some religious vocabulary and independently make links to scripture. This was seen in a lower Key Stage 2 lesson about fasting where a child said, 'Man does not live on bread alone', and in an upper Key Stage 2 lesson a child explained 'Lent is about becoming a better version of yourself'. New approaches to encourage children to think more deeply have been established and are starting to have an impact. Children shared that they enjoyed opportunities to consider the 'big question' and would like to do this more often. In an upper Key Stage 2 lesson about the cost of giving, children were asked to reflect on a variety of challenging scenarios; this theological and ethical challenge approach is something the school now needs to embed consistently across all classes. All children behave extremely well and most produce work of a good standard demonstrating pride in their learning. Many children say religious education is their favourite subject.

Teachers subject knowledge is secure, and they use skilled strategies in lessons to allow children to learn collaboratively with their peers. However, in some of the lessons seen, opportunities to use questioning to challenge children to think more deeply and theologically were missed. Staff are committed to the value of religious education and often provide time for reflection within lessons to give children the opportunity to develop spiritually through their curriculum learning. Resources are often used effectively to enhance learning as seen in an Early Years Foundation Stage lesson about a time of growth where a wide range of statues and artifacts were placed around the church for the youngest children to explore, accompanied by their Year 6 buddies. Developing more creative approaches to the teaching of religious education across all year

groups is an area the school, rightly, recognises for further development. Children's efforts in their learning are celebrated which leads to good levels of motivation and engagement. Support staff make a valuable contribution to the learning and reflect the high expectations within the classrooms. Due to the consistently applied feedback and marking policy children know what they need to do to improve their work further.

The subject leader is an excellent role model for teaching and learning in religious education, she is highly effective and has developed a culture of mutual professional support. Rigorous monitoring which includes book scrutiny, observations, pupil voice, and data analysis ensures the subject leader has an accurate picture of standards in their subject. This comprehensive monitoring information ensures all leaders and governors have a secure understanding of current standards and the strategies in place to address areas for development in religious education. Continual professional development for all staff is regularly provided and they welcome this support to further enhance their practice. Leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that religious education meets the needs of all the children at St Mary's. They identified a disparity between the achievements of some groups of children in religious education and have taken swift action to implement adaptive teaching strategies to address this. The impact of these approaches is starting to emerge, but this needs to be further embedded to effect sustained improvement. Opportunities for enriching children's learning are considered in religious education and can be seen at times such as during interfaith week when children enjoy first-hand experiences of other faiths and cultures.

## 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

Prayer and liturgy is central to school life and worshipping together is the beating heart of St Mary's. Children's attitudes towards prayer and liturgy are unfailingly respectful, reverent, and prayerful. They keenly engage in a range of adult-planned and organised experiences with a sense of peace. Children demonstrate a good understanding of a variety of ways to pray. They are given the opportunity to independently access prayer stations around school and they confidently share traditional prayers during Mass. Children in the 'growing in faith together' team work effectively together to plan, lead, and evaluate prayer and liturgy. They are assigned a class to lead prayer for weekly and they undertake this role with diligence and pride. As this level of children's leadership of prayer is restricted to this group alone, leaders now need to ensure that all children are given the same opportunity to further shape and influence the prayer life of St Mary's. Most children understand the relationship between prayer and action as demonstrated by a prayer focus on global challenges which led to fundraising for Cafod world gifts as one child conveyed 'We have to love everyone'.

St Mary's is a joyful worshipping community and praising God through prayer forms the bedrock of the school. The use of scripture has become a strength; the word of God is prominent, it is shared with confidence and explored with curiosity. Children benefit from attending Mass weekly, undertaking roles, and singing with enthusiasm within the heart of the stunning church. Parents welcome the recent increase in the opportunities to be part of the school's prayer life and regularly attend stay and pray, Mass, and assembly. Staff have received continual professional development on supporting children in planning and leading prayer but as yet they have not used these skills consistently to support all children. Staff are impeccable role models for the children and lead by example during prayer and liturgy as they strive to create engaging and spiritually nourishing experiences. In Key Stage 1 a 'wonder bag' was used during the

celebration of the word to truly mesmerise the children and encourage them to reflect on the word of God. Good quality resources support the planning of seasonally appropriate prayer and liturgy. Time and resources have been allocated to develop dedicated prayer spaces around the school; however, these need to be further enhanced to better utilise the extensive space available.

The recently reviewed policy on prayer and liturgy is well formulated and bespoke to St Mary's. There is a clear skill strategy in place outlining age appropriate and incremental development steps of how all children should contribute to and lead collective worship. At this time the policy is primarily aspirational rather than embedded but leaders are relentless in their drive to ensure that these higher expectations will become increasingly established practice across all ages. The school calendar dedicates time to key dates in the liturgical year including holy days of obligation and leaders and governors rightly prioritise children attending Mass weekly. The impact of prayer and liturgy is regularly monitored and evaluated in various ways such as the staff providing feedback to the 'growing in faith together' team on their leadership of prayer which they then reflect on. Feedback from staff, parents, and pupils about prayer and liturgy is sought and analysed by leaders as part of their cycle of self-evaluation. Governors are a visible presence within collective worship which reflects the high importance placed upon the word of God by every member of this harmonious school family.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	150561
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3513350
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Belgrave Street, Radcliffe, Manchester, M26 4DG
School phone number	0161 723 4210
Executive Headteacher	Jane Myerscough
Chair of local governing body	Amanda Donoghue
School Website	<a href="http://www.stmarysradcliffe.stoccat.org.uk">http://www.stmarysradcliffe.stoccat.org.uk</a>
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Teresa of Calcutta Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	17 January 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

## The inspection team

Helen Sullivan  
Laura Orr

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