



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INSPECTION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND ACADEMIES



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

URN: 147592

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

29 April 2026 – 30 April 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

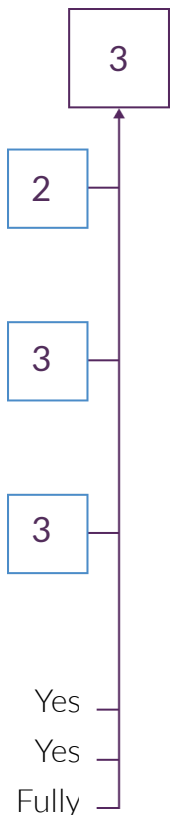
Collective worship (p.7)

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



What the school does well

- The school's mission is known and understood by all. Governors, leaders and staff bear witness to the Catholic life and mission of the school.
- School supports parents and carers effectively. Parents, in turn, feel their children are well supported and cared for.
- Staff provide strong pastoral care and support for pupils and families, particularly the most vulnerable.
- Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons, responding respectfully and increasingly using subject-specific vocabulary when answering questions.
- The engagement and respect of pupils during all celebration of the word services.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop children's understanding of their personal responsibility for their common home, their role in the service of others, and the theology underpinning this.
- Ensure the school's monitoring and evaluation programme for religious education and collective worship is implemented consistently across all classes and staff.
- Provide opportunities for all pupils to prepare class prayer and liturgy, ensuring they work collaboratively with others and self-evaluate the quality of the services they have planned.

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

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Pupils at St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School value being part of the school and participate enthusiastically in charitable and environmental activities. Behaviour throughout the inspection was good, with pupils showing respect for one another, including those of different faiths. As one pupil stated, 'we are all different but special'. The Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) team actively supports charity work, raising funds for organisations including Macmillan Cancer Support, Caritas and Cafod. Older pupils take on leadership responsibilities through projects such as the seeds and gardeners initiative with Reception children, promoting friendship, care and spiritual support. The Guardians of Creation group proudly care for the school environment. Further opportunities are needed to help all pupils develop a deeper understanding of caring for our common home and Catholic social teaching, so they recognise that their charitable work is rooted in Gospel values. Members of the GIFT team are keen to develop their leadership skills further and have identified ways to extend their role in leading prayer and liturgy across the school, enhancing the spiritual life of the wider pupil community.

The school's mission statement underpins the life of the school, with all members of the community demonstrating commitment to the school's Catholic ethos. This is evident in the care and support provided for the most vulnerable. Staff provide high levels of pastoral care and ensure families can access a range of services through strong links with outreach and specialist agencies. There is a strong culture of welcome, and parents commented that leaders and staff are approachable, listen to concerns and offer support when needed. The parent teacher association (PTA) supports the school effectively. In addition to fundraising,

members help promote events within the wider community. A range of after-school activities is available to support pupils' wider development. The school environment effectively reflects the Catholic life and mission of the school. Relationships, sex and health education follows diocesan guidance and is supported well by external services, including the school nurse. Leaders have identified that the school's mission statement would benefit from review and revision involving the whole school community, and plans are in place to further strengthen this aspect of school life.

Leaders and governors, including those from the Romero Catholic Academy Trust (CAT), understand their responsibility as guardians of the Catholic life and mission of the school. They ensure that policies, procedures and daily practice reflect and support the school's Catholic identity. Leaders and governors are committed to their roles and demonstrate a clear desire for the school to continue to improve. The recently retired parish priest has been a regular and valued visitor to the school, helping to strengthen links with the parish community and supporting the spiritual life of pupils and staff. The school works increasingly effectively with parents from entry into the Nursery class, ensuring children make a positive start to their education. Leaders and governors ensure that resources are directed towards those most in need, including vulnerable pupils and families. Staff well-being is given a high priority and is supported effectively by both school leaders and the Romero CAT. Induction procedures for new staff are effective and help staff understand the Catholic mission of the school. Leaders and governors should ensure that all stakeholders, including staff, pupils and key partners, are involved in evaluating and developing the Catholic life and mission of the school so that future improvements are planned collaboratively

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

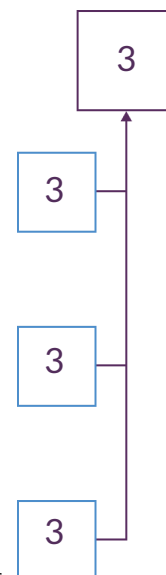
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 at St Mary's RC Primary School enjoy their religious education lessons and are willing to share their ideas and learning. Behaviour in religious education lessons is generally positive. Many pupils respond appropriately to teachers' questions and use some subject-specific vocabulary, particularly in upper Key Stage 2. Discussions with pupils demonstrate that they can speak about their current learning in religious education, although their knowledge and understanding of previous learning are less secure. Pupils understand the school's marking system; however, they have limited awareness of how well they are achieving, how to improve their work and the progress they have made over time. School assessment information indicates that attainment in religious education is not yet consistently strong across all classes and groups of pupils. Work in some books does not demonstrate the same level of challenge or expectation seen in English writing. The quality, quantity and presentation of pupils' work across the school are too inconsistent. At times, presentation does not reflect the importance of the subject or pupils' wider capabilities. Leaders should ensure that expectations for presentation and written outcomes in religious education are consistently high across the school.

Leaders have ensured that the religious education curriculum is planned over a two-year cycle to meet the needs of pupils in mixed-age classes. Most teachers observed during the inspection demonstrated confidence in their subject knowledge and an understanding of how pupils learn. Learning objectives are shared at the start of lessons, and recall strategies are used across the school to reinforce previous learning within current units of work. Teachers

use questioning appropriately in some religious education lessons, including through the use of 'cold calling', to encourage pupil engagement and participation. Religious education working walls and prayer areas in classrooms reflect current learning. Feedback to pupils and the celebration of pupils' efforts in lessons and books require further development, as practice is inconsistent across the school. Teachers recognise the importance of religious education and its contribution to pupils' wider development. However, expectations should be raised so that pupils develop more secure knowledge and understanding, reflected in both discussion and written work. Professional development opportunities are available, and staff value the training and support provided internally and through the Romero Catholic Academy Trust.

The *Lighting the Path* programme, which follows the *Religious Education Directory*, is used by school leaders and governors to deliver the religious education curriculum for St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School. Leaders and governors are working to ensure that religious education is fully comparable with other subjects in terms of timetabling, staffing and resourcing. Appropriate policies for the subject are in place. Subject leaders for religious education have endeavoured to ensure that new teaching staff receive professional development, particularly in relation to the curriculum being delivered. Teachers new to the profession value this support. Subject leaders recognise that staffing changes in some classes have impacted learning outcomes for some pupils in religious education. Subject leaders meet with other religious education leaders across the academy trust to access support, guidance and current initiatives. Leaders and governors need to communicate a clearer vision for expectations and standards in religious education to all teaching staff and ensure regular monitoring and book scrutiny form part of the school's wider monitoring programme. Leaders and governors have accurately identified the current strengths and areas for development in religious education and have established appropriate priorities to support continued improvement.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

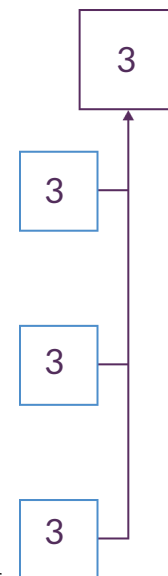
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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 respond respectfully to the experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by St Mary's RC School and showed reverence during services observed throughout the inspection. Encouragement is needed to increase pupils' participation in community singing during both whole-school celebration of the word and class prayer and liturgy. Prayer areas are established in each classroom and support the prayer life of the school. Pupils participate in liturgical ministry at school Masses through readings and the presentation of gifts. Pupils know a range of traditional prayers; however, they would benefit from experiencing a wider variety of prayer styles, particularly opportunities for quiet reflection and prayerful silence during class prayer and liturgy. Pupils demonstrate knowledge of the liturgical seasons and associated colours, although their understanding of how the liturgical calendar influences the prayer life of the school is less secure. Opportunities for pupils to plan and lead prayer and liturgy are at an early stage of development and require further strengthening. Continued work with the Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) team, and other pupils, is needed so that they become more confident in independently planning, leading and evaluating prayer and liturgy.

Whole-school celebration of the word takes place weekly, and class prayer and liturgy are provided regularly across the school. Pupils are able to talk about the daily pattern of prayer. The school has recently established an attractive prayer space known as the 'Upper Room', which is intended to support prayer and liturgy across the school community. Pupils are proud of this dedicated area and are looking forward to participating in class services within this space. Scripture was used appropriately in services observed during the inspection. Evidence of liturgical celebrations and pupils' own prayers is recorded in class faith journey

floor books. Many aspects of class prayer and liturgy support pupils' participation and reflection, including the use of questioning to encourage engagement. Opportunities for pupils to become immersed in prayerful reflection are sometimes limited. Further professional development is required to support staff in leading effective prayer and liturgy. As staff become more skilled and confident, they will be better able to support pupils in planning and leading prayer and liturgy independently. Leaders have identified the need to increase opportunities for family involvement and have recently introduced 'stay and pray' sessions across all classes.

Leaders and governors recognise the importance of prayer and liturgy in supporting the faith development of pupils and staff. The school has established a prayer and liturgy policy, a strategy to develop pupils' skills and a non-negotiable document outlining how celebration of the word should be delivered across the school. However, these approaches were used inconsistently during the inspection. A liturgical calendar is in place and provides opportunities for pupils and staff to celebrate the Eucharist throughout the school year. Professional development relating to prayer and liturgy has taken place for staff. However, further support is required to enable staff to become more skilled and confident in leading prayer and liturgy and in developing pupils' leadership of these experiences. Leaders and governors should ensure that the established monitoring and evaluation programme is implemented consistently across all aspects of religious education and prayer and liturgy. Opportunities should also be developed further for pupils to reflect upon and evaluate the prayer and liturgy they prepare and lead. Leaders and governors have ensured that prayer and liturgy are appropriately resourced to support the spiritual life of the school community.

Information about the school

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|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Full name of school | St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy |
| School unique reference number (URN) | 147592 |
| School DfE Number (LAESTAB) | 8882008 |
| Full postal address of the school | Tong Lane, Bacup, Lancashire, OL13 9LJ |
| School phone number | 01706 873123 |
| Headteacher or Head of School | Mrs Elizabeth Lloyd |
| Chair of Governors | Mr Kieran Heakin |
| School Website | www.stmarysbacup.org |
| Trusteeship | Diocesan |
| Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable) | Romero 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 | 11 June 2018 |
| Previous denominational inspection grade | Good |

The Inspection Team

Fiona Robinson Lead

Dominic Williams

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 |