

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 400570

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Wrexham

12 November 2025

## Summary of key findings

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

3

#### 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

3

#### Collective worship (p.7)

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

3

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

## Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the norms for religious education as laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school has made progress in relation to the areas of improvement identified in its last inspection. Not all of the recommendations remain relevant, due to the significant amount of time that has elapsed since the previous inspection.

## What the school does well

- The quality of the welcoming and inclusive Catholic community created by all at the school is very impressive. At its core is a commitment to care for and support the most vulnerable.
- Some good teaching practice is already in place; it has the potential to be disseminated in order to raise teaching standards across the school.
- Many pupils can make good links between scripture and the wider life of the school.
- Leaders and governors have a very impressive level of commitment to the centrality of the celebration of the Eucharist in the life of the school.

## What the school needs to improve

- Leaders should develop a rigorous system to monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the school. They should ensure that the analysis which flows from this work results in self-evaluation processes that clearly identify strengths, pupil progress, and areas for improvement.
- Develop an approach to the planning of learning that ensures that all pupils benefit from appropriate levels of challenge. Consequently, ensure that learners are consistently making at least good rates of progress.
- Raise the quality of collective worship in order to create a sense of awe and wonder for all involved in both adult and pupil-led celebrations.

## 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

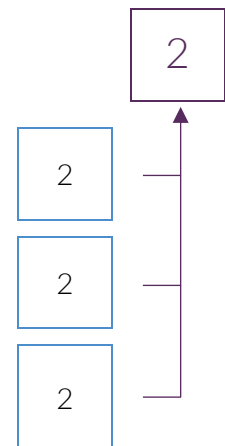
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### 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



Most pupils are aware of the distinctive Catholic nature of the school, and they feel well cared for and supported. They have an awareness of the need to respond to the Gospel message to follow the example of Jesus and to help others. This manifests itself by, for example, the support given to the local foodbank and by taking part in the work of Cafod to support those in need abroad. However, they do not have sufficient opportunities to have a meaningful influence on the decision-making process involved in this work. Pupils are in the early stages of developing an understanding of Catholic social teaching; they were able to speak with inspectors about one or two key elements of it. Pupils are aware of the links that can be made between their good works and scripture, for example, during the inspection some were making good links between Isaiah's writing about 'the light' and their own day to day efforts to be kind and thoughtful to others. The behaviour of most pupils is good. However, a minority lack the maturity required to fully concentrate in lessons.

Staff exhibit high levels of commitment to the implementation of the school's mission statement, and they genuinely want the best for the pupils in their care. The manner in which all are welcomed into the school is very impressive. The Catholic community is highly inclusive and there is an admirable determination shown to welcome the most vulnerable in particular. In doing this, and therefore by putting the Church's teaching on the preferential option for the poor into practice, it has gladly accepted the additional challenges that have been presented as a consequence. Staff are positive role models for pupils; their relationships with one another and with pupils bear a very good witness to the school's life and mission. Pastoral care is strong, and much thought has been devoted to developing ways of working that are aimed at creating an environment for learning in which all have the potential to make good progress. The school

environment is clearly Catholic in nature; however, this lacks good levels of pupil input as yet. Each class has a simple area in place designed to create a focal point for prayer. They are liturgically appropriate. An appropriate programme for relationships and sex education is in place, which is compliant with the expectations of the bishop.

Leaders and governors take their roles as the guardians of the school's Catholic life and mission very seriously. The long serving and dedicated chair of governors has a thorough understanding of the school's work. He commits time to providing regular, practical support in this area, often accompanying children to Mass, for example. He has some very good, practical ideas for further improvements to be made. The head teacher has an impressive determination to lead the school with the welfare of the most vulnerable in mind. The subject leader is knowledgeable and committed to her challenging role. A good partnership with the parish is in place. The way leaders have created provision to facilitate regular Mass attendance for all pupils is a strength of the school. Good relationships with parents have been developed, and 95% of responses to the parental survey, distributed as a part of the inspection, were positive. One parent, for example, spoke of a curiosity about the faith that has developed in her child 'due to the influence that the team at St Mary's inspires'. Leaders and governors are not sufficiently clear about their priorities for development. Their self-evaluation covers all required areas; however, it is descriptive in nature, lacking analytical rigour flowing from thorough monitoring of provision.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

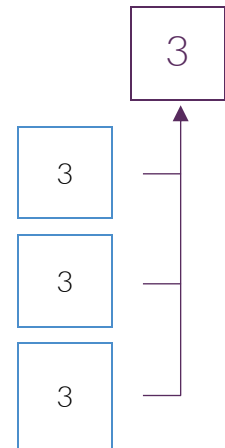
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### 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



Pupils make limited progress in their religious education (RE) studies. They do not benefit from consistently high levels of challenge in their tasks. Consequently, there is a lack of depth to pupil responses and extended writing opportunities are limited. Pupils make some use of their knowledge and skills to think ethically, and many are able to link scripture to the wider life of the school well, particularly in relation to supporting those in need. Most pupils can speak about their learning; however, they are not confident in their use of subject specific vocabulary, which hinders the development of their depth of understanding. Their knowledge is limited in some key areas, such as the Sacraments of the Church, for example. Pupils show limited ability to work independently, and they have insufficient opportunities to take the initiative in their learning. This has a negative impact on the development of their creativity. The majority of learners show a willingness to focus well on their studies. However, a significant minority struggle to concentrate for extended periods. This presents a barrier to good progress being made. Learners report that they enjoy their lessons, but they are not confident in articulating what they need to do next in order to improve. The quality of their learning in RE is on a par with that in the other subject areas.

Teachers display a positive demeanour during lessons, and they realise the primacy of RE in the taught curriculum. The level of their subject knowledge is good; however, this is not consistently reflected in lessons and overall, the quality of teaching ranges between good and adequate, with some unsatisfactory elements. In the good teaching observed during the inspection, teacher-pupil relationships were positive and learning activities were appropriately challenging, as older learners looked into the role of women in the Old Testament, for example. However, some teaching provided low levels of challenge, and some pupils were allowed to continue talking during teacher explanations, which impacted negatively on many learners. Teachers'

questioning skills are underdeveloped. Initial questions are good, but they are not generally followed up with secondary questions to search for depth of understanding. Marking is consistently completed in a timely manner; however, it has a limited impact on raising learners' attainment. Current assessment does not have a significant impact on the planning of learning. Nearly all pupils complete the same tasks during lessons and due to this, the differing needs of learners are not fully met. This has a limiting influence on the learning of those who struggle and on those who have the potential to achieve at a high level.

Leaders and governors have done some good work in relation to the implementation of a new curriculum for RE. The subject leader has begun the work of creating a structure of planning for learning in a diligent manner. However, insufficient professional development opportunities have been provided to ensure that staff are fully aware of the demands made by the new *Religious Education Directory*. The way learning is planned does not fully cater for the range of abilities of pupils in the school's integrated classes; this raises some issues in relation to the progression of learners as they move through the school. Leaders' monitoring of RE is not sufficiently rigorous. Observations of lessons and book reviews, for example, do not feature regularly in their work. Consequently, leaders and governors do not have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and learning that is based on the gathering of empirical evidence. Analysis of assessment data is underdeveloped. As a result, leaders cannot make use of measurable data to ascertain the rate of progress made by learners as a whole and by cohorts such as the considerable number with additional needs, for example. This lack of data and analysis has resulted in self-evaluation that is shallow and wholly qualitative in nature.

## 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

3

**Provision**

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

3

**Leadership**

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

3

3

Most pupils at St Mary's can recognise and articulate ways in which prayer and liturgy influence the wider life of the school. In the whole school collective worship observed during the inspection, for example, children were able to make a link between the Gospel reading of the Good Samaritan and the 'Power of Good', the theme of Anti-Bullying Week. However, many pupils respond passively and not always with enthusiasm to the regular prayer and liturgical life of the school. Most pupils have a limited understanding of the ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition. Pupils have opportunities to contribute during adult-led collective worship by reading scripture, for example. However, their skills of projection at these times are underdeveloped. The range of prayers known is limited to the most familiar, such as the Our Father and the Hail Mary. Pupils have few opportunities to work with others to prepare prayer and liturgy, due to a reliance on adults to take leading roles. A small minority of pupils understand how to reflect on their experiences of prayer and liturgy well.

Prayer and liturgy offer participants a limited range of ways of praying; this does not reflect the richness of the Catholic tradition. Scripture, and in particular the Gospel, is not consistently celebrated as having the central place in prayer and liturgy. Staff lead prayer frequently. At times, they do not insist on pupils being attentive, and this can lead to experiences for them which are not consistently inspiring or meaningful. Some good provision is in place; for example, inspectors observed well led class worship about the writing of Isaiah. However, some practice is adequate with some unsatisfactory elements. Staff do not regularly orchestrate good opportunities to allow pupils to plan and lead collective worship. This hinders the development of their independence and creativity in this area. Music and art in celebrations are underutilised. There are prayer spaces in each classroom, and the hall is appropriately sized for celebration of Mass; however, these areas are not sufficiently well

developed to be colourful, welcoming, focal points that are conducive to prayer and reflection. Due to the points made above, prayer and liturgy are not of the quality needed to inspire a sense of awe and wonder in those present. The school seeks to work well with the parish. Pupils are offered frequent opportunities to attend the celebration of Mass. This element of provision is a strength of the school. However, the role of pupils when at Mass in the parish church is somewhat passive and they do not regularly benefit from opportunities to, for example, read, or take part in offertory processions. The parish priest celebrates Mass every month at school and on these occasions, children are more active participants.

The school does not have a policy for prayer or liturgy in place. Therefore, the role that it takes in the school's life is not sufficiently clear to all staff. Leaders and governors show an interest in wanting to develop pupils' skills of participation; however, this is underdeveloped and an agreed developmental strategy for the progressive development of children's participation in liturgy and prayer is not in place. Leaders and governors have an admirable commitment to ensuring that the Eucharist enjoys a central role in the life of the school. This is clearly a strength of provision. Professional development for staff in relation to enabling pupils to plan and lead prayer and liturgy is underdeveloped. Consequently, pupils lack opportunities to grow in this area. Staff have not benefitted from effectively targeted training, aimed at providing high quality prayer and liturgy. This, in turn, has impacted negatively on the ability of staff to confidently lead liturgical celebrations that are high quality, engaging, and accessible to all. Some monitoring of prayer and liturgy has been undertaken; however, commentary often focusses on peripheral concerns, rather than on key skills that need to be developed to raise the quality of prayer and liturgy. This weakness in monitoring prevents the school's self-evaluation work from being able to clearly identify priorities for improvement.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	400570
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	6663320
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Milford Road, Newtown, Powys, SY16 2EH
School phone number	01686625582
Headteacher	Sarah Ruggeri
Choose an item.	Mike Bacigalupo
School Website	st-marys.powys.sch.uk
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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	March 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	3

## The inspection team

Lyndon Watkins  
Louise Mills

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