



# Diocese of Westminster

---

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **St Mary's School**

47 Fitzjohn's Ave, Hampstead, London NW3 6PG

Telephone: 020 7435 1868

e-mail address: enquiries@stmh.co.uk

DCFS Number: 202/6084

Headteacher: Miss A Rawlinson

Chair of Governors: Mrs M Jeffrey

---

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

---

Date of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> May 2008

Date of previous inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> October 2001

Reporting Inspector: Mr A F Clark

## Description of School

St Mary's School is an independent Catholic primary school for pupils aged 2.5 to 11. While boys and girls are accepted up to Year 2, all boys leave by the end of Year 2. The number of pupils on roll is 294, of whom 78% are Catholics. The school was founded in 1926 by the Sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary and has since been handed over to a Catholic Education Trust. The Sisters, now known as the Companions of Jesus (CJ), live next door and support the charism of the foundress, Mary Ward, in the life of the school. Pupils come from local state nurseries and local preparatory schools, and especially in the lower age range, from the immediate locality. There are 25.9 full time equivalent teachers and 25% are Catholic. Five teachers have the Catholic Certificate of Religious Studies and a further teacher has a Catholic qualification in leadership. The school is situated in Hampstead and welcomes pupils from a wide number of cultures and backgrounds.

### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding;      Grade 2: Good;      Grade 3: Satisfactory;      Grade 4: Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St Mary's is a very good school with outstanding features. The strong Catholic ethos underpins all aspects of school life. The Governing Body, the headteacher, deputy, and Leader of Learning for Religious Education all lead the school in their different ways with a great commitment to its Catholic life and practice. Prayer and liturgy play a very strong role in the life of the school. This is supported by the ordained school chaplain who is a part time member of staff (2.5 days a week) and who celebrates Mass regularly in the chapel, situated at the crossroads of the school's corridors. The Leader of Learning for Religious Education manages and promotes the teaching and curriculum of religious education very well. The spirit of Mary Ward is alive and well known in the school and the pupils are inspired by her commitment to the faith in penal times and to the importance of the education of girls.

**Grade 1**

### Improvement since the last inspection

The previous report described St Mary's as a happy school and that prayer and worship were a real strength in the school. Areas for improvement were related to the introduction of the 'Before you Begin' section in the Religious Education programme 'Here I Am', making better use of the 'Holy Corner' to focus children's attention during prayer, improving the balance and arrangement for lessons in Key Stage 1 and ensuring the PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) policy including the SRE (Sex and Relationship Education) is implemented. All these recommendations have been complied with. The 'Before you Begin' sessions are arranged before each unit of teaching in 'Here I Am' though their extent could be developed further. The prayer focus in each classroom is now a display to give inspiration to the pupils who have become involved in looking after them. The Key Stage 1 lessons are better timetabled and spread across the week and the PSHE/SRE policies are fully implemented.

**Grade 1**

### The capacity of the school community to improve and develop

There is very good communication and planning across all areas of school life. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and Leader of Learning for Religious Education have a clear

view both of the school's strengths and the areas where yet further development can be made. The regular reviews, both with staff and with pupils' work give good feedback on where progress needs to be made. The school's self evaluation is robust and rigorous, and Catholic life and religious education are at the forefront of the consequent plans to improve and develop. The style of management in the school is to involve staff and even pupils in self evaluation at all stages and there is a strong sense of ownership of both improvement and success in the school. There is active promotion of a culture of high expectations and excellence. Each level of management is aware of the targets they are aiming to achieve and they report on their progress.

**Grade 1**

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Continue to develop the quality and opportunity for 'Before you Begin' training
- Develop the marking strategy further to include suggestions to the pupils for reaching the next outcome or level

---

## **The Catholic Life of the School**

### **Leadership and Management**

The leadership and management of St Mary's in living and sharing its Catholic life are very good. The Catholic life of the school is the focus of the governors, headteacher and leadership team. The pupils are given opportunities for being involved in activities which stem from the school's commitment to its Catholic identity and they become involved with fund raising. They also make proposals through their school council on developing the Catholic practice of the school. The Mission Statement says that 'St Mary's seeks to provide an education firmly founded on Christ and the Catholic Faith. Spiritual and moral principles are nurtured in a way that is reflected in daily life'. The headteacher and leadership team are taking the school forward in its Catholic life with the emphasis on prayer, good liturgy, and partnership with parents. The induction provision of new teachers and the staff development programmes relating to Catholic life and mission are planned in detail. The Governors take a close interest and provide strong support for developing the Catholic life of the school. They produce an annual Governors Report to the community in which it plays a major part.

**Grade 1**

### **The Prayer Life of the School**

The prayer life of the school is outstanding. The headteacher is enthusiastic in her promotion of finding imaginative ways to pray that the pupils find engaging and joyful. She is complemented in this by the other members of the SLT (senior leadership team), the Leader of Learning for Religious Education and the school chaplain who all contribute to ensuring the active participation of the pupils in the liturgy and prayer. Lessons begin with prayer and this sometimes involves pupils praying spontaneously, in praise, in thanksgiving and in petition. All pupils experience an act of worship each day. The pupils attend Mass either in classes or larger groups on a regular basis. The chaplain, who is also a member of staff, prepares the liturgy in such a way that the pupils are involved and engaged. The tradition of singing in the school is well developed and the pupils sang joyfully at the Mass attended in the course of the inspection. The Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation and Eucharist all take place in the school

and involve the whole community. The CJ sisters act as prayer companions to pupils preparing for their First Holy communion. There are good relationships and communication links with the parishes that the pupils are drawn from so that the home-school-parish partnership is evident and strong. This strong prayer and liturgical life contributes very positively to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. There are effective systems in place to review and monitor the provision for prayer, liturgy and collective worship. Currently the weekly prayer sessions around 'St Mary's Way' are being developed which provide for some pupils a particular opportunity for prayer.

**Grade 1**

### **How effectively does the school /college promote community cohesion?**

There is a wide variety of pupils brought together for the common purpose of education. The school promotes community cohesion very well. In a number of contexts the meaning of Catholic as universal and inclusive is described effectively. The traditions of Mary Ward further enhance the understanding of the pupils that they are all called to be builders of community in today's world. There is effective introduction to three world faiths Judaism, Islam and Hinduism, ensuring that the pupils are open to the diversity of faiths to be found in today's society. The teaching staff are from a number of different countries, north and south of the equator, and together with the diversity among the pupils themselves, the school rejoices in a positive experience of building cohesion and understanding. The school engages in educational, social and charitable projects as partners and the pupils are accustomed to relating well to the wider world.

**Grade 1**

---

## **Religious Education**

### **Achievement and Standards in Religious Education**

The pupils are very articulate about religious matters. The standards in teaching religious education are very high as are the learners' achievements in religious education in relation to their abilities. The pupils are involved in their lessons, contributing freely and with confidence. The pupils enjoy their religious education lessons and are spontaneous in suggesting applications or insights on the work in hand. The habit and skill to apply what is learned in religious education to their own experience is noteworthy. The pupils' work is moderated by the Leader of Learning for Religious Education. Their work books are well presented and illustrate the pupils' involvement by the neat written summaries accompanied by photos of classroom occasions that they contain. The pupils show great confidence and skill in explaining and discussing what they are learning in religious education.

**Grade 1**

### **Teaching and learning in Religious Education**

The quality of teaching is good and all the lessons observed were good or very good. The planning is thorough within the constraints of timetabling and preparation. The school should look to see if greater contact time between the Leader of Learning for Religious Education and the teachers could be found to deepen and extend the 'Before you Begin' elements of the 'Here

I Am' programme. Effective and imaginative use of ICT is used in Religious Education lessons; even the very young pupils are at home in making selections electronically in inter-active whiteboard lessons. The monitoring and informing of learners' progress is good. Every lesson begins with a clearly displayed WILT (What I am Learning Today statement). Pupils are becoming accustomed to evaluating their success in achieving the aims of the lesson. This will be further helped by developing the marking strategy further to include suggestions to the pupils for reaching next outcome or level.

**Grade 2**

### **Quality of the Curriculum**

The programme of study being followed is 'Here I Am' and the requirements of the Bishops Conference that 10% of curriculum time must be given to Religious Education and that the Curriculum Directory must determine the teaching content of Religious Education are fulfilled. Excellent use is made of the 'Here I Am' programme and there was imaginative variety in its particular use by different teachers. Religious education is at the core of the curriculum. The clarity with which both pupils and teachers can show how their learning in so many subjects starts from and reflects back on the themes being followed in religious education was very good. There is close correlation to make sure that in each class religious education builds on prior learning and corresponds to the pupil's needs and aspirations.

**Grade 1**

### **Leadership and management of Religious Education**

The leadership and management of religious education is very good. The Leader of Learning for Religious Education demonstrates devoted and effective leadership of religious education. This is particularly important where there is a relatively high proportion of non-Catholic teachers teaching religious education. The teachers are confident in their teaching. This confidence comes from the regular support they receive in this area from the headteacher, other members of the SLT, the chaplain and Head of Learning in Religious Education. The Governing Body works in close partnership with the head and SLT to provide support and strategic planning for the advancement of religious education. There is an understanding and commitment to the mission of the Church in their approach which is so powerful in contributing to the positive experience of the pupils of Catholic life and tradition. This results in the subject enjoying a high profile in the school, illustrated concretely by the prominent displays that are erected in both the corridors and classrooms. Religious education is well resourced and the budget allocated to it is appropriate for a core subject.

**Grade 1**