

St Mary's School

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

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 7 June 2019



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is outstanding

- The religious education curriculum meets all the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* and challenges pupils to deepen their religious literacy in a rich and creative way.
- The school's very strong Catholic identity permeates all aspects of the learning environment of the school.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and the excellent resources available contribute to and enhance the pupils' learning experience.
- Pupils are actively engaged in their own learning, making good links between their knowledge and their faith journey.
- Pupils get a very good start to their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage through a richly resourced and nurturing environment.
- Pupils are confident and articulate users of religious vocabulary.
- Teaching actively engages pupils in their learning and pupils demonstrate outstanding behaviour for learning across the school.
- Teachers who are not Catholic or who are new to Catholic education are well supported into the Catholic ethos and curriculum by the leaders of learning for religious education.
- Teaching assistants and support staff are well deployed to maximise learning for all pupils.
- The very knowledgeable governors and trustees are outstanding in their support and challenge of the teaching of religious education.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The school fully meets the 10% curriculum time set by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- Religious education is at the centre of this vibrant worshipping community.
- The 'St Mary's Way' is known and valued by all pupils and staff.
- Prayer and worship are central to the Catholic mission and ethos of the school.
- Prayers are woven into the daily life of the school and pupils have ample opportunities to participate in both traditional and spontaneous prayer.
- The school chapel and prayer garden are valued holy places that give pupils special places for prayer and worship.
- The school's commitment and generosity to the Common Good and Catholic Social Teaching are outstanding.
- Pupils are confident and very articulate in their understanding of their call to social justice and human flourishing.
- The school has embedded a focus on the '4 Rs' (Respect, Resilience, Reflecting and Risk-taking.) These are an important part of St Mary's life and practised by all.
- Religious education receives a very high priority in terms of funding and resources.
- The school chaplain is a valued member of staff who supports the school in an outstanding way. He is integral to the prayer life of the school.
- Parents are positive and appreciative of the impact the school has on their children's journey of faith.
- School leaders, governors and trustees are fully committed to the education mission of the Church.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

Classrooms are now equipped with up to date technology allowing both staff and pupils to benefit from its use. Technology now enhances the delivery of religious education (RE) throughout the school. The recently opened 'Global Learning Centre' includes a cutting-edge engineering and robotics lab, virtual reality launch pad, art and design studio as well as a green room. The scheme of work has also been reviewed since the last inspection.

The content of classroom religious education is outstanding

The content of curriculum fully meets all the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* (RECD) All four areas of the RECD are effectively mapped across the key stages. The curriculum meets pupils' learning needs in a creative and engaging way. Religious education is very well resourced and teachers are creative in the way resources are used to support children's learning and provide for a range of learning styles, needs and abilities. The teaching of other faiths makes meaningful links with key beliefs and practices and pupils enjoy their learning in these areas. Pupils were very positive about their RE lessons and were eager to share their learning. The governing body ensures that religious education is given high status with generous funding.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupils of all ages learn well at St Mary's School. Pupils across all key stages can articulate their understanding and learning confidently. Across the school the pupils are confident, enthusiastic learners who make good progress due to the high quality resources and provision provided both indoors and outdoors. The pupils show high levels of curiosity, imagination and concentration and are proactive learners. Pupil responses in classes along with work in books demonstrates the range of progress from their starting points. Attainment data for all groups of pupils is analysed by the leader of learning for RE on a termly basis; however it is recognised as an area for development in terms of a more consistent and rigorous approach. There was some evidence to show that attainment was at least as good as in other core subjects. The behaviour for learning of all pupils across the school is exemplary. They are focused and demonstrate a keen and highly motivated attitude to their learning and progress.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

The quality of teaching in this school is judged outstanding. Teaching is creative, engaging and fun ensuring that pupils enjoy their lessons. In a Year 6 lesson on how oil is used as a sign of healing, pupils were able to make strong links to previous learning and were confident in sharing their ideas. In Nursery, children were focused on Jesus as a friend and the activities were well planned to ensure children were able to access the learning in a fun and relevant way. All teachers have high expectations of pupils and pupil engagement in every class was of the highest standard. Teachers use questioning skillfully including higher order questioning. Marking and next step questions using pink and green marking are used well in some classes but this is not consistent across the school and is seen as an area for development. Where it is used well pupils were able to confidently explain how it helps them to improve their work. The teaching of other faiths is embedded in the curriculum and pupils are encouraged to share their own faith if they are not Catholic and to describe the similarities and differences between the faiths. Pupils' own experiences are shared and valued. The leader of learning in RE monitors regularly, ensuring the very good teaching is maintained. New teachers are teamed with experienced teachers to ensure collaborative planning and use of resources, which enhances the quality of teaching across the school. The learning environments are bright, engaging, well-resourced and of the highest quality. Support staff are very well deployed and

play an intrinsic role in supporting the learning for all abilities. Behaviour of pupils in lessons, on the playground and around the school is exemplary.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education

is outstanding

The quality of leadership and management of religious education is outstanding. There is a clear vision for the school amongst all school leaders and a commitment to continued improvement. The headteacher is currently the leader of learning for classroom RE and has two other staff members to support the Catholic life of the school. There are succession plans in place to support a new leader going forward. The leadership team ensures that there are many opportunities for continuing professional development for staff, including those new to teaching and to Catholic education. Senior leaders and governors are fully committed to enabling staff to obtain the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies and support them in the process. Governors are regular visitors to the school; receive regular reports, are well informed and know the school well.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Focus on assessment procedures, ensuring consistent and rigorous tracking of pupils' progress across the school.
- Continue to develop marking and feedback to pupils ensuring that it is fully developmental and is consistent across the school.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

Parents are now able to attend a variety of services in school and are appreciative of being able to attend Masses and 'Praying Together' services on a weekly basis. Parents can share in the faith with their children in a variety of ways including Gospel diaries and prayer bags that children take home.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

The school ensures that RE is at the core the curriculum in ways that are outstanding. It is very clear to all that this is truly a Catholic school. Pupils know they are lucky to be at this school, parents appreciate all that the school does and governors support the school well. Pupils spoke with pride about RE being the central subject in the school and that it informs all the other parts of their learning. The school ensures 10% of classroom curriculum time is given to RE and fulfills the requirements of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. There are ample opportunities for professional development open to all staff. New staff and those new to Catholic education are well inducted into the RE ethos and curriculum of the school. The governors and trustees ensure that resources are in place for RE to be the core of the curriculum by providing a very generous budget.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

is outstanding

Prayer and worship are central to the life of this school and are outstanding. The school chapel lies at the heart of the school both physically and symbolically. Life at St Mary's is underpinned by the Gospel values and these are summed up in the 'St Mary's Way' and the school mission statement, which is clearly on display throughout the school. There are many opportunities throughout the school for daily collective worship and prayer. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are quickly introduced to the prayer life of the school in an age appropriate way. Pupil led 'Praying Together' services are embedded in the school at age appropriate levels and pupils are very confident in leading these acts of worship. The celebration of the Eucharist is carefully planned and many other celebrations including Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament are offered at key times throughout the liturgical year. The exceptionally strong links with the school chaplain, who is a part time member of staff, ensure that the celebration of the Eucharist is at the heart of the school's Catholic tradition. Pupils who wanted to take responsibility for the school prayer garden initiated the 'Prayer Council' and this has developed into a group with responsibility for prayer spaces around the school. They are passionate about their role and were eager to share their thoughts with inspectors. Older pupils read the story of the week to younger pupils to reinforce the message. There is a prayer garden, which is regularly used by pupils to pray quietly and reflect or to use the rosary beads and prayer cards that are available. The Pope's tweet is displayed prominently to engage the pupils in his message. The weekly school newsletter includes a message from the school chaplain so parents are included in the message he is giving pupils and children in EYFS take home prayer bags.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –

is outstanding

The gospel call to justice and service is highlighted and lived out at St Mary's in a variety of ways. The school council and 'Arrupe Club' (named after the Jesuit priest Pedro Arrupe) work strongly together as teams aware of the importance of following the Gospel values in their school, their community and in the wider world. Each year the school supports two charities, which are chosen by the children, parents and staff. This year, the charities that were chosen were The Royal Free

Hospital and The Great Ocean Clean Up. The school also supports other charities throughout the year such as The Contact Club, Doorstep and Little Village, Cafod, The Catholic Children's Society and The Cardinal Hume Centre. A culture of respect and a call to serve is cultivated throughout the school and every opportunity is taken to recognise and celebrate others. The school actively encourages the pupils to engage in acts of kindness and they can articulate why they do this. In the meeting with the 'Prayer Council' and 'Arrupe Club' pupils told inspectors that they, 'had a duty to follow what Jesus taught us.' Pupils have an excellent understanding of the theology underpinning their actions and are encouraged to see themselves as part of a community with responsibility for other people. Pupils are encouraged to undertake charity work independently of school and an award is given each year at prize giving for charity work. The school recognises that while a range of opportunities exist for pupils to respond to the call to service in the community they wish to enhance and develop this further during the following year.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

is outstanding

The school has established strong links with parents who are very positive in their praise for the school. In the questionnaire sent out for the inspection parents comments included: 'The school has amazing 'Praying Together' services, a real joy to watch.' 'As practising Catholics, we really like the ethos of the school and the religious education it provides.' 'Great opportunity for Catholic life and spiritual growth.' The school utilises the support from parents and uses their expertise to enhance RE throughout the school. Parents from other faiths have been invited into school to share their faith and practice. Parents are invited to Masses and 'Praying Together' services as well as other key events such as nativity plays and carol concerts. The school chaplain alongside other members of staff prepares the children for First Holy Communion and parents are also invited. Parents and members of the parish are welcome at the twice-weekly Masses in the school chapel. The school has an active PTA and hosts a termly forum where parents can share their views on collective worship and academic RE. The weekly gospel themes are shared with parents via the school calendar and pupils' Gospel diaries and prayer bags ensuring that they are taking faith home. The school interacts fully with the diocese and local and Catholic schools. Staff regularly attend training and moderation opportunities with the diocese and maintain regular contact with their diocesan advisor for support.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school

is outstanding

Senior leaders and governors share a common vision for the school driven by faith and the 'St Mary's Way'. The mission statement is central to the whole community and underpins school life. The headmistress ensures that St Mary's is a warm, welcoming community, recognising the uniqueness of each individual. She encourages pupils across the age range to share and live out their Catholic faith on a daily basis. Her positive and encouraging drive, her vision for the school and the school's impact upon the community underpin this outstanding Catholic school. The governing body and trustees act as effective critical friends, ensuring that RE and the Catholic life of the school are prominent in their ongoing plans. They maintain a visible presence in the school, attending assemblies, celebrations and visiting classrooms. The behaviour of the pupils is outstanding and this is reflective on the leadership and management shown by all adults working in the school.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Enhance the already strong community links to further deepen pupil understanding of their call to service.

Information about this school

- The school is a Catholic Independent school in the locality of Hampstead.
- The school serves the parish of St Mary's, Hampstead and St Thomas More, Swiss Cottage.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 52%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 13% and from other faiths is 22%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 44%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 3.
- There are 7% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 3 have statements of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)/ Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is above average.

Department for Education Number	202/6084
Unique Reference Number	100067
Local Authority	Camden

Type of school	Primary
School category	Independent
Age range of pupils	2 years 9 months - 11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed in Nursery then Female
Number of pupils on roll	302
The appropriate authority	The governing body and board of trustees
Chair	Mrs Susan McCarron and Mr Harvey Rands
Headteacher	Mrs Harriet Connor-Earl
Telephone number	020 7435 1868
Website	www.stmh.co.uk
Email address	office@stmh.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 December 2013
Classroom religious education	Very Good
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 13 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 3 of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Mrs Ann Staunton

Lead Inspector

Mr Nicholas Kehoe

Associate Inspector

Miss Patricia O'Donnell

Associate Inspector

Information about inspection

The purpose of Diocesan inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The inspection report is also used to inform parents and carers, and the wider Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools. It also assists schools in the work of self-evaluation and improvement, and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

This report is published by the Diocese of Westminster and is available at:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

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