

St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy

URN: 146226

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham

12–13 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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

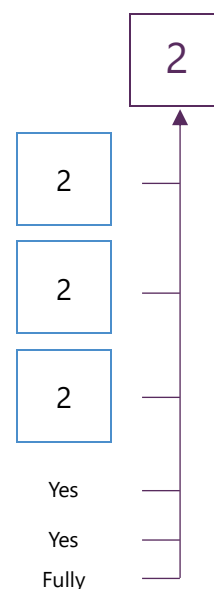
Collective worship (p.7)

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



Compliance statement

- The school's religious education programme ensures that 10% or more of the timetable is dedicated to teaching and learning in the subject.
- The school follows the guidance of the diocesan bishop in all matters.
- The school has fully responded to all action points from the previous inspection.

What the school does well

- The physical environment at St Mary's fully reflects the school's Catholic mission and virtues.
- Pupils can confidently articulate and make links to Catholic social teaching.
- The presentation of pupils' written work in religious education is good.
- The structure of religious education lessons is consistent across all year groups.
- There is a diverse range of prayer and liturgy on offer at St Mary's.

What the school needs to improve

- Enable governors to be fully immersed and involved in the Catholic life and mission of the school.
- Use a variety of evidence to accurately assess pupil progress and attainment.
- Support pupils so that they can confidently evaluate celebrations of the word.

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

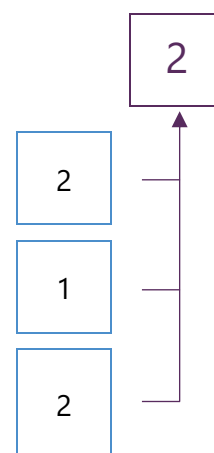
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



Pupils confidently express the Catholic mission of St Mary's, linking it to the school's virtues and behaviour policy. Pupils say, 'We help people on the buddy bench, just like Jesus did. We all care for each other'. They understand their worth, recognising that, 'We are unique and created equal in the eyes of God'. Pupils take personal responsibility for the common good through social action groups: for example, Key Stage 2 pupils lead younger pupils in planting seeds and the school council fundraise for the prayer garden. Engaged in Catholic social teaching, pupils respond to local and global issues: Minnie Vinnies, for example, send clothes to pupils in Kenya. Each class partners with a charity throughout the year. Through chaplaincy work and daily interactions, pupils demonstrate respect and a commitment to their faith in action.

The school's mission is fully lived out by pupils and staff, deeply influencing school life at St Mary's. Staff are exemplary role models, having actively shaped the school's Catholic life, mission, and virtues. A strong sense of community is evident, with parents affirming, 'Staff provide great support to pupils and families'. Pupils confidently recognise and articulate the school's Catholic character and virtues. Diversity is celebrated as a strength, enriching the faith community. Parents and carers of other faiths are invited to share their experiences during study weeks. Staff foster exceptional relationships, demonstrated through initiatives like 'The Heart That Sees' award, recognising pupils' service for others. Pastoral care extends beyond school, including the provision of hot meals for vulnerable families through links with the parish. Catholic life and mission is visible throughout the school, from scripture displays and prayer stations to diversity boards reflecting human dignity. The environment consistently embodies the mission: 'Believe, Succeed, and Soar'. Well-planned spiritual opportunities, including meditation and 'lectio divina',

enrich prayer and liturgy. Over 95% of staff agree that professional development empowers them to shape the school's Catholic life and mission. Relationships, sex and health education is carefully structured and embedded into the curriculum.

Leaders and governors actively promote the Catholic life and mission of the school, recognising it as a core responsibility: this is a standing item in staff and governor meetings, and the headteacher models this commitment through active parish involvement. Collaboration with the diocese, including Synod initiatives, is encouraged, and leaders engage regularly with the parish, attending Mass and welcoming parishioners to school events. The school's mission is clearly communicated to parents, who affirm its impact: they say that, 'St Mary's gives all children the opportunity to shine beyond academic achievement'. Catholic social teaching is central, ensuring a focus on the most vulnerable. Staff well-being is prioritised through workload reduction, subject leadership time, and well-being sessions, fostering a supportive, family-like environment. Catholic social teaching is carefully integrated into the curriculum, as seen in the Catholic social teaching provision map. For example, Year 6 pupils studying the suffragettes link their learning to the common good. Governors, though few, are not fully immersed in contributing to the Catholic life and mission of the school: however, they are very supportive and they commend the school's impact in relation to the Catholic ethos, confirming that, 'Children come home talking about their faith'. School leaders monitor Catholic life and mission through learning environment walks, and feedback from pupils, staff, and parents, supported by the Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust and diocesan education team. Pupils take leadership roles, such as that of playleaders, promoting inclusion. Staff engage in ongoing professional development through diocesan, trust, and chaplaincy programmes, including training on the new Religious Education Directory and Prayer and Liturgy Directory.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

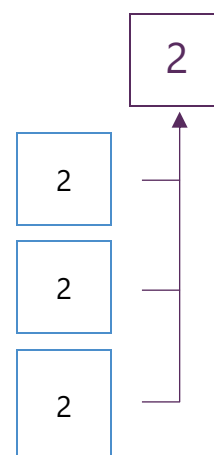
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 develop knowledge and skills in line with the Religious Education Directory. They make meaningful connections, such as making the link between the Penitential Act from the Mass to the concept of remorse, with one pupil explaining that, 'the 'I confess' (prayer) links to the Sacrament of Reconciliation'. Retrieval practice is embedded in lessons, and adaptations support pupils with special educational needs and disabilities through tailored resources such as knowledge mats, key word lists and 'sentence builders'. Each lesson begins with a prayer, retrieval of knowledge and a period for reflection. In some lessons, pupil independence is notable, as they use prompts and scripture to complete challenges and make links. Pupils demonstrate religious literacy, as shown by one child's observation: 'Jesus wears red and blue: red for his sacrifice and blue for his loyalty to God'. They ask and answer thoughtful questions, and engage well in lessons, producing high-quality, creative work which also links to Catholic social teaching. They say, 'Jesus treats all people the same in sharing his meal, so this links to human dignity'. Behaviour is consistently good, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of religious education. Pupils understand how to improve their work, with one stating, 'I highlight driver words to show I've used them correctly'.

Teachers confidently deliver religious education, linking lessons to prior learning. They model the pupils' responses and show how to improve them using scripture and key vocabulary therefore demonstrating a good understanding of how pupils learn. They set high expectations and use effective questioning, but systems for assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding are less clear or consistent across the school. Within lessons, teachers allow time to recap 'the big question' so that pupils can think more deeply about their learning. Teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to religious education, effectively conveying its value to pupils through their teaching and interactions. One example of this is use of a timeline to indicate scriptural links so

that pupils begin to understand historical and biblical connections. Teachers create opportunities for reflection, such as silent contemplation during lessons on the Eucharist, demonstrating the importance of pupils' spiritual development. Learning is celebrated through class displays and peer discussion. Resources, including prayer areas and topic-linked artefacts, support all learners effectively: for example, a prayer area for continuous provision in Year 1 based on The Last Supper, and story board 'widgets' in Year 5. Teaching assistants and other adults proactively support pupils to enhance learning, for example, by scribing pupils' responses and sequencing scriptural story-board images.

Religious Education is taught in line with the Religious Education Directory, and is valued equally with core subjects. School displays demonstrate that religious education is at the heart of St Mary's. Teachers access high-quality professional development through the diocese and Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, supported by subject leaders who offer opportunities for coaching and team-teaching. The leader for religious education states, 'All pupils should understand God's love, mercy and grace, and to develop their own personal faith. We achieve this through the intense study of scripture'. Leaders ensure that there is a sequential curriculum in place, with adaptations for all pupils. Leaders have ensured that pupils access a variety of enrichment activities, including art, drama, music and visits from external visitors, including the parish priest. Living Stations of the Cross and the crowning of Mary add further to provision. Regular monitoring, through learning walks, pupil and parent feedback, and workbook moderation, ensures continuous improvement. The headteacher affirms, 'One of our greatest achievements in religious education is how pupils live out Gospel values and our school virtues in their daily lives'.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

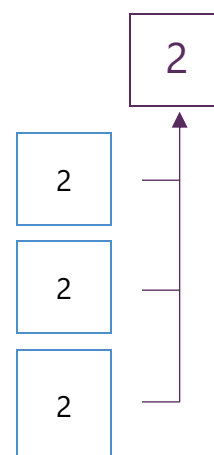
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

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 across all age groups engage in prayer and liturgy with respect and full participation. They understand and experience a variety of prayer forms. One pupil explains: 'We sing hymns as prayers, use the prayer garden, run prayer clubs, and helped to create our new prayer room. We also write and use different prayers each month as part of the liturgical year'. Pupils can express how prayer affects them personally: 'I feel close to God when I pray. It calms me, and even when things go wrong, God can help'. Pupils undertake ministries and collaborate with others to plan and evaluate prayer and liturgy, which are documented in well-presented floor books. They can articulate how prayer influences Catholic social teaching and its connections to the wider curriculum. During class celebrations of the word, most pupils successfully link their reflections to a weekly theme, such as 'diversity'. Pupils are liturgically literate and, with support, can prepare and evaluate prayer and celebrations of the word: however, pupils do not deeply reflect on their experiences, so their comments have little impact at present. The chaplaincy team takes an active role in enhancing the school's faith life, as seen in their action plan, which includes organising a retreat, raising Fairtrade awareness, creating a flower cross, and leading celebrations of the word for Key Stage 2 pupils.

Prayer and liturgy are central to school life, planned in line with the liturgical calendar and weekly themes. Daily prayer follows a consistent pattern, with whole-school celebrations linked to Sunday Gospel readings and the liturgical season. A variety of prayer styles, including 'visio divina' and creative recitation of the rosary, enrich worship. Pupils apply to join chaplaincy and social action groups, reflecting the importance of prayer and its link with Catholic social teaching. The leader for prayer and liturgy identifies next steps, models high expectations, and supports staff in developing pupils as leaders of ministry. The progression of skills for celebrations of the word

is age-appropriately planned, with Key Stage 2 pupils gradually taking full responsibility. Recently established 'evaluation stations' allow pupils to begin to share feedback on celebrations of the word, though this is at an early stage of development. Lay chaplains help facilitate liturgy planning and delivery, and pupils are encouraged to explain their choices. Well-presented prayer areas, including a new prayer room, support engagement. Parishioners and parents attend prayer and liturgy and key liturgical events.

St Mary's has a well-structured prayer and liturgy policy, supported by an annual plan of provision. Leaders ensure pupil progression in prayer through clear planning and documentation. A detailed annual calendar, created with governors, includes significant liturgical events, such as celebrations of the Eucharist, and Reconciliation. The established prayer routine incorporates both seasonal and topical prayer. Leaders, including governors, prioritise professional development for staff, offering training, retreats, and opportunities to explore the new Prayer and Liturgy Directory. They maintain a strategic overview of prayer and liturgy, ensuring it is high priority. Lay chaplains and leaders use a variety of prayer experiences which are appropriate to both the needs of the school and the wider community. The school's lay chaplain actively models and leads prayer, building confidence among staff and pupils. Recognising the importance of prayer and liturgy, leaders and governors allocate resources and budgets in line with other core subjects. Pupils contribute to selecting resources, leading to the addition of new liturgical prayer cloths and bibles in all classrooms. Leaders and governors regularly review and monitor prayer and liturgy, including feedback from pupils, staff and parents, incorporating these views into their self-evaluation documents.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy
School unique reference number (URN)	146226
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9253330
Full postal address of the school	St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy, Sandon Road, Grantham, NG31 9AX
School phone number	01476 562017
Headteacher	Sara Tyers
Chair of local governing body	Eleanor Eaton
School Website	http://www.stmarysrcprimary.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Our Lady Of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	28 November 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	1 - Outstanding

The inspection team

Patricia Chapman
Stephen Lawson

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

