



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 139880

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Hallam

06–07 November 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

1

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

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

1

Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

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 fully complies with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference. Religious education is taught for at least 10% of the timetable. The school is fully compliant with the requirements of the *Religious Education Directory*.
- There are no additional primary school requirements from the Bishop of Hallam.
- The school has fully addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership that inspires and unites the school community.
- The exemplary behaviour and attitudes of pupils, both during lessons and in unstructured times around school, is very evident.
- There is a flourishing partnership between school and parish that significantly enhances their shared prayer life.
- Highly effective oracy teaching and learning has enabled pupils to reach a very high standard of religious literacy.
- There is exceptional pastoral care of pupils. Pupils feel safe, cared for and loved.

What the school needs to improve

- To provide a range of well-planned and effective opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of staff.
- To ensure pupils have regular opportunities to use their own initiative and take greater control over their learning, enabling them to develop individuality and creativity in religious education.
- To develop staff's skill and understanding of prayer and liturgy to enable them to support pupils in planning, preparing and leading prayerful 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

1

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

1

1

1

St Mary's is an outstanding Catholic school. Pupils understand the distinctive Catholic identity of the school. They actively participate in the school's chaplaincy provision, willingly taking leadership roles, such as through the GIFT (Growing in faith together) and CAFOD (Catholic agency for overseas development) pupil groups. Pupils relish the opportunity to lead fundraising events and speak with enthusiasm about their work to support charities such as Rotherham Hospice and Water Aid. Pupils can clearly articulate the theology underpinning these actions and link these well with the demands of Catholic social teaching. Pupils readily relate these actions to the teachings of Jesus and understand their role in 'following Jesus' footsteps'. Pupils understand their responsibilities to care for the world and regularly take part in school and parish litter picks. Pupils have a strong knowledge of their class saints and are inspired by their work. When asked about the strengths of the school, pupils name the staff. They report that there is, 'always someone that they can turn to'. This makes them feel safe, cared for and loved. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. This is evident during lessons and in other unstructured times around school. Pupils consistently display kindness and respect for others.

The school's mission statement, 'Let our light shine,' is clear, inspiring, and a lived reality. Pupils and staff understand and embody its message, linking it meaningfully to the word of God and their own gifts and talents. One child remarked, 'Joining this school has allowed me to stop hiding my talents but have the confidence to use them.' A genuine sense of community permeates the school community with relationships rooted in care, respect and compassion. The highly effective and valued pastoral team goes above and beyond to support pupils, families, and colleagues, ensuring that all members of the school community feel valued, included, and cared for. Staff are exemplary role models for pupils. They describe working at St Mary's as 'being part

of one big family, supporting each other through times of joy and sadness'. Currently, opportunities for the spiritual development of staff are limited, and this has been recognised by the school as an area for improvement. The provision for relationships, sex and health education is of a high standard. Pupils confidently articulate what they have learned and demonstrate a clear understanding of why these lessons are important to their personal growth and wellbeing.

The headteacher provides outstanding Catholic leadership and is deeply committed to the faith life and mission of the school. Her dedication and vision have energised the school community, ensuring that the school's Catholic charism is at the heart of all it does. The school has worked hard to develop strong and vibrant links with the parish. The parish priest is a regular and valued presence in school, strengthening the bond between school, parish and home. The Catholic curriculum is thoughtfully planned, with Catholic social teaching clearly embedded across the whole taught curriculum. Pupils understand how Catholic social teaching underpins their learning; they show initiative in applying these principles in practical and meaningful ways. For example, members of the school council wrote to the headteacher to ask for the school's support in a local charity appeal, explaining how this linked with their responsibilities as part of a Catholic community. Contributions such as this are valued by leaders and pupil voice plays an integral role in shaping school improvement. Governors are highly committed to the Catholic life of the school and make regular visits. These visits are not currently focused on key priorities and do not include written reports shared with the full governing body.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

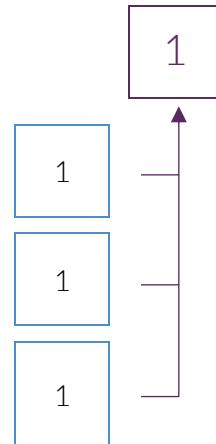
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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 demonstrate excellent knowledge, understanding and skills which reflect the learning required by the *Religious Education Directory*. Pupils make very good progress and confidently recall key previous learning. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is a notable strength. Teachers demonstrate a thorough understanding of pupils' individual needs and employ highly effective adaptive teaching strategies, ensuring that all pupils are able to access learning successfully and make good progress. Skilled teaching assistants use relevant resources expertly to support pupils. Pupils are religiously literate and demonstrate the ability to reflect both spiritually and theologically. They articulate their understanding of faith with confidence, fluency and insight, showing a mature capacity for discussion and reflection. During the inspection, pupils in all classes were given regular opportunities to pause and discuss ideas. Pupils enjoy their learning and show high levels of enthusiasm and engagement. Behaviour in lessons is exemplary and ensures learning time is maximised. Currently, pupils do not have opportunities to take the initiative in their own learning and demonstrate creativity and individuality in how they present their knowledge and understanding. While assessment for learning is evident during lessons, pupils are not able to articulate how well they are achieving or what specific steps they need to take to improve.

Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and expertise, confidently presenting key content. They demonstrate high expectations and a deep commitment for religious education, keen to develop their own practice for the benefit of pupils' learning. Targeted strategic work on developing oracy and pupils' understanding of scripture is highly effective. During observed lessons, pupils were able to explain scripture passages, understanding the main messages and how this relates to their own lives. Teachers use questioning skilfully to assess pupils' understanding, identify where they are in their learning, and extend their capacity for spiritual

and moral reflection. Feedback to pupils is inconsistent though and not yet fully embedded. Pupils do not receive regular, relevant feedback that enables them to understand what they need to do to make progress in their learning. Lessons are well-planned; sentence stems and modelling of high-quality examples of good practice are used effectively to support pupils' learning. A wide variety of resources and recording styles is used in religious education lessons. This is evident in books and from speaking with pupils. One child commented, 'We get to use our talents in art, music, writing and drama during religious education lessons'.

Leaders and governors ensure that the school curriculum for religious education is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Directory*. Leaders have carefully and thoughtfully planned for the integration of a new religious education scheme of work, ensuring that learning is sequential, engaging and faithful to the Church's teaching. The leadership of religious education is of a very high standard. Regular and rigorous monitoring, including lesson observations, book scrutiny and pupil voice, has been highly effective in raising standards in teaching and learning. The strategic focus on developing pupils' oracy and deepening their religious literacy has had a significant and measurable impact, enabling pupils to articulate their faith with confidence and understanding. Leaders ensure that religious education is creatively and imaginatively planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Pupil voice has been captured regularly and is used to inform future planning. Leaders recognise the need to refine the school's marking and feedback policy so that pupils are given clear, actionable steps that enable them to understand how well they are achieving and what they need to do next.

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

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

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

1

1

The experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school engage pupils deeply. They show high levels of reverence, engagement and participation. Regular opportunities to sing their praises and prayers contribute to a high standard of communal singing. Pupils understand a variety of ways of praying that are part of the Catholic tradition, although their knowledge and understanding of the Church's liturgical year is limited. Pupils have regular opportunities to work with adults to prepare and lead Celebrations of the Word, though further development is required to ensure these are consistently well-constructed and prayerful. Pupils demonstrate confidence in explaining how prayer and liturgy influence the curriculum and wider life of the school. They have frequent opportunities to pray and reflect, for example through contributing to class prayer trees and writing in their individual prayer journals. The impact of the school's prayer life is clearly evident in pupils' personal spiritual development. Pupils speak confidently about their prayer life outside of the classroom and school setting. One child commented that, 'This school has helped me to get closer to God. I know I can pray for help, comfort and to give thanks.'

Prayer and liturgy are central to school life at St Mary's. The annual plan of provision is carefully considered by school leaders and includes a variety of opportunities for pupils, parents and parishioners to participate. This careful planning has ensured that there is a flourishing partnership between school, parish and parents. This was highlighted by one parent who said, 'We always feel involved and included in the prayer life of the school.' Pupils benefit from a wide range of prayer experiences, including meditation, adoration, Celebrations of the Word and singing. Scripture passages are thoughtfully chosen and link well with the Church's season and specific chosen themes. The school makes effective use of creativity, including the performing arts, to enhance pupils' experience of prayer and worship. This was evident during the inspection

in a deeply moving Remembrance Day service attended by parents, parishioners and local veterans. To further strengthen this provision, staff now need additional support to develop their skills so they can help pupils lead Celebrations of the Word that are prayerful, reflective and aligned with the liturgical norms of the Church. The school has identified the need to develop prayer spaces within school that pupils can access to increase opportunities for spontaneous prayer.

The school's policy on prayer and liturgy is carefully formulated and provides clear guidance for staff. Leaders have ensured that the school calendar and timetable are carefully structured to ensure that pupils have numerous opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist. This includes observance of holy days of obligation, other saints' days and participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the ways of praying and have skilfully integrated these into the prayer life of the school. Regular monitoring, including the use of pupil voice, has been effective in evaluating and developing the range and quality of prayer and liturgy in school. Leaders are aware that further professional development is required to strengthen staff confidence and expertise in delivering Celebrations of the Word and supporting pupils in planning their own. The school is well resourced for prayer and liturgy. The well-maintained school chapel, and the provision of high-quality classroom prayer resources, enable pupils and staff to create prayerful experiences. The school places high importance on the evaluation of the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy. School leaders, including governors and the parish priest, regularly collect feedback from pupils, staff and visitors/parishioners to celebrate achievements and plan ongoing improvements.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	139880
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3723322
Full postal address of the school	Herringthorpe Valley Road, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, S65 2NU
School phone number	01709361502
Headteacher	Anna Osborne
Chair of local governing body	Peter Short
School Website	www.smh.school
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Francis Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	February 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good (2)

The inspection team

Christopher Power Lead

Pippa Donnelly 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