



## DIOCESAN CANONICAL INSPECTION REPORT

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL, RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

### St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Lowry Drive, Marple Bridge, SK6 5BR

<b>School URN:</b>	146189
<b>Inspection Date:</b>	24 May 2022
<b>Inspectors:</b>	Mrs C Murphy and Mrs R Elmore

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	Previous Inspection:	Outstanding	1
	<b>This Inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Catholic Life:</b>		Good	2
<b>Religious Education:</b>		Good	2
<b>Collective Worship:</b>		Outstanding	1

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

#### St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy is a good Catholic school.

- St Mary's Voluntary Catholic Academy is a vibrant and caring Catholic school with a strong mission: 'We live and learn by journeying with Jesus for the greater glory of God'. Pupil leadership is at the heart of the school and helps to shape this strong mission. The SANCTA values (Support; Aspire; Nurture; Challenge; Trust; Achieve) are clearly and enthusiastically articulated by the school community and promoted by the many pupil groups. Governors have a strong sense of the strengths of the school and their part in sustaining and developing into the future.
- Religious Education is good. Leaders have a systematic monitoring and evaluation schedule and work well with staff across the school to support development in teaching and learning. Teachers follow and enhance the *Come and See* curriculum with activities such as 'Bible Alive' days, to strengthen pupils' knowledge of scripture. In some lessons, the lack of pace and over-use of worksheets limits the extent to which pupils write at more length. The assessment pieces demonstrate that pupils are capable of more in-depth pieces of writing.
- The Catholic Life of the school is good, with much to celebrate. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school - in particular the support given during the Covid-19 pandemic. The school is at the heart of the local Catholic community and works well with the dioceses of both Nottingham and Shrewsbury. Behaviour is good, but not always exemplary. There are a wide range of activities and a variety of pupil led groups provided for pupils to express and explore their faith.
- Collective Worship at St Mary's is outstanding. Supported by the trust and school lay chaplains, pupils benefit from high quality and regular opportunities to worship in a wide variety of ways and settings. Pupil led worship is well developed and consistent across the school, with every child participating in planning and leading worship in their classes and within the whole school. Pupils are enthusiastic about planning and leading liturgies and staff are committed to helping them with this.

## FULL REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Mary's is an average-sized, one-form entry primary school with 238 pupils on roll, including a 40-place nursery provision.
- Due to its geographical position, it serves the communities of two dioceses - the parish of St Mary's, Marple Bridge, in the Diocese of Nottingham and the parish of Holy Spirit, Marple, in the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The majority of pupils transfer to Marple Hall High School.
- St Mary's has been part of the St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust since its conversion to an academy on 1 September 2018.
- 80% of pupils are baptised Catholics; 10% of pupils are from other Christian denominations; 2% of pupils are from other faith backgrounds; 8% of pupils have no religious affiliation.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is 10.5%, which is below the national average figure. 2.5% of pupils have an educational, health and care plan to address additional needs; this is just above the national average figure.
- A low proportion of pupils (6.7%) are eligible for support through the pupil premium funding, which is provided to mitigate against any disadvantage.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a change of leadership and an executive headteacher is currently in place.

### WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

#### ■ Catholic Life:

- Ensure that pupils' behaviour is exemplary at all times by staff supporting pupils' engagement to swiftly deal with any low-level disruption.

#### ■ Religious Education:

- Ensure the pace of lessons encourages and engages all pupils throughout, and that pupils are given the opportunity to finish activities.
- In order to secure sustained improvement, leaders should ensure that analysis and evaluation clearly identifies areas for further improvement and that monitoring leads to greater, measurable impact.
- Provide more planned opportunities for writing at length and make sure that learning outcomes are not limited by the over structure of tasks.

#### ■ Collective Worship:

- Share the excellent examples of pupil leadership and models of Collective Worship with other schools.

## CATHOLIC LIFE

## THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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**The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school – good**

- St Mary's has a strong Catholic ethos which permeates through all aspects of school life. There is a clear mission and this is summed up by the SANCTA Values which are enthusiastically spoken about by the pupils.
- Pupils' views are sought and are respected; they contribute to the evaluation and future planning of developments in the Catholic Life of the school. Through the many groups, pupils have a sense of purpose and belonging. They are also encouraged to take on responsibility and to think of others less fortunate. They enjoy raising money and can talk about their own class charities as well as the whole school efforts for CAFOD.
- Community is at the heart of St Mary's. Parents are very complimentary about the care and support provided, and of the family feel of the school, which they said positively influences their children. During the pandemic they were very appreciative of the efforts the school went to in order to sustain the Catholic Life of the school and to involve all pupils, including those learning from home.
- While behaviour is generally good across the school, it is not yet exemplary at all times. In lessons, sometimes pupils became disengaged from the activity, or their learning, and adults are not always proactive in their management of this; at other times within the school, behaviour is at least good.
- Pupils value and respect Catholic traditions and links with the parish. They have a strong sense of belonging. They can talk about some of the diocesan and bishop's themes and initiatives and the activities they have shared, such as the celebratory days for Mary and other, scripture-linked days.
- Pupils have an understanding about relationships and sexual development according to their age and capability, which is in keeping with the Church's teaching.

### **The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school – outstanding**

- The provision for Catholic Life is outstanding. Staff are fully committed to this area of school life and have excellent understanding and enthusiasm for prayer and the vocational aspects of education.
- The school has, over time, provided many and varied opportunities for pupils to experience and deepen the Catholic faith. Staff respond quickly and creatively to new initiatives so that the school community is aware of current developments in the diocese.
- St Mary's has a very strong sense of community which is articulated by all stakeholders, especially parents and families of the school, who compliment the 'strong family feel of the school'. The pastoral care of all families and pupils is central to the mission of the school, promoted by the strong relationships between staff, pupils and parents.
- The leader of Collective Worship, together with the lay chaplain and trust's lead lay chaplain, is ambitious for the Catholic Life of the school and provision is planned carefully in order to contribute positively to the Catholic Life of all pupils. Events are planned carefully to provide a range of experiences across the liturgical year for the engagement of all stakeholders. The Catholic Life of the school remained a high priority during periods of school closure, including the 'echo series' which pupils could engage with at home, alongside the 'Come and See' themes, through the use of the school's online platforms.
- The school environment highly promotes and reflects the importance of Catholic Life within St Mary's. Each classroom contains high quality displays and artefacts and the wider school environment demonstrates different aspects of the liturgical year and diocesan themes. Areas such as the 'holy hub' hold a vast array of artefacts from which pupils can draw upon for inspiration, as well as creating a reverend, prayerful space.
- The programme for relationships and sex education is effective, using the 'Journey in Love' programme supported by materials from Sister Dorothy Black. Much of the content and teaching of this curriculum is currently concentrated in the Pentecost term and the school may wish to consider how teaching can be delivered throughout the year.

### **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school – outstanding**

- Leaders promote Catholic Life as a priority and this is highlighted in the school improvement plan, and other action plans, in order to continually reflect and improve provision. Leaders, including governors, articulate their ambition for Catholic Life and strive to ensure that the mission and values of St Mary's are evident and present within the school environment.
- Monitoring and evaluation of Catholic Life is rigorous and systematic and includes a wide variety of monitoring, such as learning walks, and pupil and parent surveys. The analysis of this evidence, in collaboration with governors, helps to identify clear ways to continually improve and evolve, which result in strategic plans to bring this to life within the school.
- Parental engagement is a strength of the school and the positive relationships are well celebrated by both school and families. The highly effective strategies of engaging families within the life of the school help to ensure all are involved in the Catholic Life of the school, which was continued during the pandemic and periods of school closure.
- Leaders place a high priority on marking special events within the liturgical year, including the bishop's themes of 'Encounter, Discipleship and Missionary Discipleship'. Over recent years staff have provided a range of activities to support diocesan initiatives such as 'A heart that sees,' 'Year of the Word' and 'The Year of St Joseph, the worker,' which have enhanced the Catholic Life for the pupils at St Mary's and inspired them to plan charitable events of their own.

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- Leaders ensure that all staff are able to access training through the St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi-Academy Trust and the diocese to ensure that all staff are well developed and have the skills and knowledge they require. Leaders also provide regular 'in house' training to address the needs of the school, which is highly valued by staff. Because of this, numerous staff have moved onto further leadership roles within the trust and diocese in recent years.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	<b>2</b>
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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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### How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education – good

- Pupils make good progress. Assessment data shows that pupils were in line with diocesan expectations at the end of Key Stage 2 at the end of the academic year 2020-2021. Leaders at St Mary's track and measure progress carefully using school systems and moderation takes place to ensure accuracy of assessment.
- Pupils in the both the nursery and reception classes receive a strong start and are able to participate in a range of activities linked to Pentecost. They clearly express and articulate their learning and understanding and are eager to share this with others within the classroom and across the school.
- In the majority of lessons, behaviour is good and pupils demonstrate they are able to concentrate well to achieve good outcomes. In the strongest lessons, pupils listen carefully and are able to show religious literacy as they approach tasks, making links to previous learning about the Holy Spirit and incorporating aspects of scripture and prayer. Where learning is less strong, some groups of pupils become disengaged, and this is reflected in some of the pupils' workbooks.
- Most pupils express their enjoyment of Religious Education and are keen to learn about different aspects of Religious Education. They are interested in their lessons and can recall key information about different topics. Some pupils sometimes feel frustration that they do not have enough time to finish tasks or complete activities.
- A wide range of learning opportunities are provided within Religious Education and across the curriculum which most pupils enjoy. These are further complemented with cross curricular opportunities and theme days including, a 'Bible Alive' project and 'other faith' weeks, to further enhance the experience of pupils at St Mary's.

### **The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education – good**

- The quality of planning and provision in Religious Education is good. Teachers use the 'Come and See' scheme to effectively plan sequences of learning and provide a range of differentiated activities for learners at all levels.
- Most pupils' Religious Education workbooks demonstrate progress over time, and show a wide range of different learning across different year groups. Books are mainly well presented, and follow a clear sequence of learning.
- Where time is managed well in lessons, pupils achieve and are more engaged in the content, leading to good outcomes, However, some teaching lacks pace, leading to disengagement from pupils in lessons. This in turn limits the amount of work produced by pupils because they are not given enough time to complete tasks or engage with them fully. Pupils themselves articulate that they are often not given enough time to complete work.
- Where opportunities are given, pupils are able to write in length and quality in response to tasks; this is especially demonstrated in the assessed pieces in separate assessment books. However, planned activities sometimes limit these outcomes for pupils when tasks are over structured or worksheet-led.
- Where teaching and learning is at its strongest, pupils have a clear idea of how to improve and what they need to do next, often linked to driver words and the marking and feedback policy. Next steps are taken from assessed pieces and transferred to Religious Education workbooks in order for gaps to be identified and addressed.
- Learning environments in the classroom and across the school are of high quality and support learning well. Displays demonstrate diocesan initiatives, the liturgical year and current 'Come and See' topics which support pupils' learning with key vocabulary and 'driver words'. Achievement is celebrated for all pupils and all responses are welcomed.

### **The extent to which leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education – good**

- Leaders and governors ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirement of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and each key stage. Very often, this goes above and beyond expectations, with the inclusion of regular themed days and 'Bible Alive' sessions, which enhance pupils' knowledge of Bible stories and scripture.
- Leaders ensure that Religious Education is comparable to other core subjects and invest in high quality training and resources. Staff development is a priority for the school and the Religious Education subject leader works closely with all staff to support and share information from recent training. Staff all have access to training from the St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi-Academy Trust and the diocese to support their own subject knowledge.
- Leaders have a rigorous timetable of termly monitoring and evaluation which is systematic and includes a range of evidence; e.g. book scrutinies, learning walks and pupil voice. However, all leaders now need a more focused analysis to evaluate the outcomes and key themes of monitoring activities to ensure greater impact on the provision for Religious Education, in order to plan for future improvement.
- Governors are actively involved in the school and are knowledgeable about Religious Education. The Governor for Religious Education conducts regular visits and takes part in monitoring activities alongside the Religious Education leader and is fully informed of standards and recent developments in the school.
- The requirements of the relationships, health and sex education curriculum (RHSE) are taught throughout school using the 'Journey in Love' scheme and other materials adapted from Sister Dorothy Black's resources. A long-term plan has been established and this is monitored by leaders.

## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP	I
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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for the Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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### How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship – outstanding

- Pupils participate in a wide range of Collective Worship experiences. They benefit from worship in different locations, such as the outside classroom in the foundation stage area and other locations around the school, such as the Mary garden, the 'dingley dell', willow dome and 'holy hub'. During whole school Collective Worship, pupils are respectful, listen attentively and respond thoughtfully, with pupils in Year 6 guiding and sitting with the youngest pupils.
- Pupil leadership of Collective Worship is well established and is flourishing. Pupils plan creatively, including elements such as dance and drama. Pupils say that they enjoy preparing and leading acts of worship for other pupils and value the help and guidance given to them by the adults including the school's lay chaplain.
- All pupils are given the opportunity to prepare Collective Worship and records of planning and evaluation demonstrate that there is sound knowledge built up over time across the school. They leave St Mary's well prepared for their next stage in their education and take with them a secure understanding of worship and prayer.
- Pupils benefit from very close involvement with both of the parishes linked with the school. They read at Mass and enthusiastically participate in parish events and preparation for First Holy Communion. This contributes to the strong sense of community and of the school's place at the centre of the local Church family.
- Pupils evaluate Collective Worship and are involved in the planning of liturgies throughout the year which are linked to special festivals and events - such as the 2020 'Year of The God Who Speaks', the 2021 'Year of St Joseph' and the Synod 2022-23.
- Pupils feel that their views are taken into consideration. They talk about working with the executive headteacher as part of the 'faith friends' group to 'make the school safer and have better friends'.



### **The quality of provision for Collective Worship – outstanding**

- Collective Worship is central to life of school. Adults are confident in supporting and guiding pupils so that pupils quickly become able to lead worship themselves. Adults have excellent knowledge of the Church's seasons and feasts and provide good models of Collective Worship themselves. In turn, they are ably supported by the school's lay chaplain and trust's lead lay chaplain, who provide another layer of expertise.
- The school gives the highest priority to ensuring that resources are of the highest quality, including the many prayer spaces both inside and outside the school. In doing this, they provide interest and variety which helps to engage pupils and provide reflective experiences. Adults provide a variety of creative opportunities including liturgical dance, prayer groups, Bible journaling, prayer-card making and Catholic mindfulness along with times for spiritual art response, meditation, drama and prayer trails.
- St Mary's continued to provide high quality Collective Worship during periods of partial school closure as a result of the global pandemic. The school provided an online platform for engaging experiences and participation from all pupils, even those at home, was encouraged. The headteacher led daily prayer and the lay chaplain provided weekly worship. Parents and carers reported that they valued the efforts of the school at this difficult time and now are being welcomed back in person to regularly worship in school.
- The staff are well informed about current themes, including the special years such as the 'Year of St Joseph' and the bishop's termly themes. They provide creative and varied opportunities for pupils to express themselves and gain knowledge and skills.
- The school is central to the local faith community and is much valued by both parishes with enthusiastic participation in parish life. The school ensures that pupils are well prepared to participate in parish Masses.

### **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship – outstanding**

- Leaders have expertise in how to plan and deliver Collective Worship; they have an extensive knowledge of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts. Leaders ensure that Collective Worship is given the highest priority in the life of the school and that resources are of the highest quality. They have created a school environment, which includes areas to accommodate large and small groups of pupils, where they can reflect, pray and plan their liturgies.
- There is a well-planned schedule of monitoring and evaluation which ensures that leaders and governors have an accurate picture of the strengths of the school and what can be further developed. Leaders actively take account of the views of pupils, parents and carers so that these form part of future planning.
- Leaders make the professional development of adults the highest priority and ensure that there is participation at both diocesan and trust events. The school's lay chaplain and trust lead lay chaplain play an important part in the development of Collective Worship.
- Leaders ensure that the school has a prominent place in the local community, both in the parishes and in events such as the 'Stockport Faith Days'. They value their partnership with the parishes and encourage pupils and their families in the life of the Church: for example, pupils talk to parishioners about what they do at school.
- Leaders, including governors, have a good knowledge of the strengths of the school and their self-evaluation of Collective Worship acknowledges the strengths and the impact it has on their pupils, parents and the whole school community.

## SCHOOL DETAILS

<b>School Name</b>	St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy
<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	146189
<b>CMAT</b>	St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi-Academy Trust

The inspection of this school was carried out on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham under Canon 806 of Canon Law in accordance with the *evaluation schedule* for diocesan canonical inspections in the Diocese of Nottingham. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. The process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule is in line with the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA).

During the inspection, the inspectors observed 8 Religious Education lessons and 4 Acts of Collective Worship.

Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, the subject leader for Religious Education, the school's leader for Collective Worship, the trust's lead lay chaplain, the school's lay chaplain, the trust's CEO and a director of performance and standards and a governor. Discussions were also held with pupils and parents.

The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including reports of the governing body, action plans, the school development plan, monitoring forms, assessment information and parental response forms. Inspectors also examined the work in pupils' Religious Education books.

<b>Chair of Governors:</b>	Dr Nick O'Brien
<b>Executive Headteacher:</b>	Mr Paul Ackers
<b>Date of Previous School Inspection:</b>	10 December 2014
<b>Telephone Number:</b>	0161 427 7498
<b>Email Address:</b>	<a href="mailto:enquiries@mmb.srscmat.co.uk">enquiries@mmb.srscmat.co.uk</a>

## WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN

Within the report, the following grades are used:

<b>Grade 1</b>	Outstanding
<b>Grade 2</b>	Good
<b>Grade 3</b>	Requires Improvement
<b>Grade 4</b>	Inadequate

In the context of the whole school, the overall effectiveness grades have the following meaning:

<b>Grade 1</b>	Outstanding	The school is a highly effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are exceptionally well met.
<b>Grade 2</b>	Good	The school is an effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are met well.
<b>Grade 3</b>	Requires Improvement	The school is not yet a good Catholic school, it is not inadequate however, and there are aspects that require improvement. There will be a monitoring visit within the next 18 months and the school will be re-inspected within 3 years.
<b>Grade 4</b>	Inadequate	There are features in need of urgent and immediate attention. The school is not meeting the basic minimum requirement for adequacy as a Catholic school. The school will receive an annual monitoring visit and will be re-inspected within 3 years.