

Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for  
**St Mary Of The Angels Catholic Primary School,  
Ellesmere Port**

URN: 111357

Carried out on behalf of the **Right Rev. Mark Davies**, Bishop of Shrewsbury on:

Date: 17-18 May 2023

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 curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

## Summary of key findings

### What the school does well

- The mission statement, 'love Jesus, love learning and love life' is a living reality permeating the whole school.
- Leadership is passionate, supportive, and ambitious for all pupils, staff, and the whole community it serves.
- A real sense of team working in which everyone is valued is at the core of all relationships.
- There is a vibrant learning environment both inside and outside the school and it reflects the pride taken by all in the faith community.

- Pupil behaviour is exemplary. They are true ambassadors for this well-loved Catholic school.

What the school needs to improve:

- Widen the role of prayer leaders so that they can extend their independence and organisational skills.
- Develop pupils' capacity to evaluate their own learning in religious education.

## 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:.....

1

### 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



Pupils at St Mary's fully embrace and understand the Catholic life and mission of their school. Irrespective of their diverse backgrounds, they are rightly proud of belonging to this faith community. Pupils speak with confidence of how Jesus is the centre of their lives, informing their thoughts and actions, 'it's a Catholic school, we have Jesus in our hearts.' It is evident in the number of roles pupils enthusiastically undertake, as members of the school council, Mini Vinnies, eco warriors and prayer leaders. Pupils talk eloquently about supporting others through their charitable work for a local food bank and Cafod. Mini Vinnies work closely with the parish St Vincent de Paul group, speaking with genuine conviction of supporting God's family locally and globally, 'Jesus wants us to do this!' They organise and raise funds for Syrian refugees and victims of the earthquake in Turkey. The eco warriors are equally strong, promoting a sense of caring for God's world, planting trees, and looking for ways to save water and protect wildlife, saying they are gifts from God. Suggestion boxes are in every class and pupils know their voice is heard and acted upon. Pupils know they belong to a rich Catholic faith tradition where all are welcome whatever their faith or cultural background. 'We accept everyone into our school.' As a consequence, all pupils flourish.

This palpable sense of welcome is firmly rooted in the mission statement, 'love Jesus, love learning, love life.' This is reviewed every year by the pupils and all stakeholders. It informs each of their actions, and all staff and pupils see it as their anchor. Pupil behaviour is exemplary, and pupils recognise that this is because 'Jesus is at the heart of all their actions'. It is reflected in the excellent relationships at every level. All staff and governors are exemplary role models. Pupils say that 'everyone is kind to each other, and teachers are good role

models'. Pastoral care is an outstanding feature of the school, 'the teachers are kind to us'. A high standard of care is evident through the whole community. Staff members speak movingly of how they are supported, especially in difficult times. Governors make wellbeing a high priority and ensure all are supported. The parish priest comments how this is extended to the wider community, not just through the period of the pandemic, but in more recent tragic events when the whole staff embraced families in need. The parish priest also says he gains strength from the support offered to him in his role.

The mission statement is truly at the heart of all guidance given by leaders. Governors say, 'the Catholic faith is lived and breathed in everything they do'. Diocesan guidelines are fully met, and all leaders ensure Catholic life and mission are at the centre of the planning of the whole curriculum. An impressive relationships and sex education policy reflects the leaderships' drive to ensure diocesan guidelines and Church documents are followed. Scripture is at the heart of this policy. Leaders are truly ambitious for the school and ensure that they all play a full part in enhancing its Catholic ethos. Governors speak of the smooth transition of headship over the last year. The senior leadership team is outstanding in combining the vision and deep religious understanding of the head teacher with the considerable skills of the religious education lead and deputy headteacher. Together with the strong guidance of the governors, this ensures that high quality training and internal support is given to all staff enabling them to be exemplary role models in promoting the Catholic life and mission of school.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....	1
Pupil outcomes How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....	1
Provision The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....	1
Leadership How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....	1

All pupils, regardless of their various starting points are making good and, in some cases, outstanding progress in religious education. This is in line with other core subjects. Pupils say how much they enjoy their lessons, especially more creative approaches. They appreciate expressing themselves in a variety of ways. Behaviour in all lessons is outstanding, giving all pupils the opportunity to maximise their learning. Each lesson begins with recall of learning. Pupils show excellent understanding of their work and an eagerness to learn more and remember more. It is clearly seen in the themes of Ascension and Pentecost. Pupils are secure in their knowledge of how the Holy Spirit inspired the disciples to continue the work of Jesus. Older pupils can compare the different lives of St. Peter and St. Paul and their unique experiences. Pupils can explain why Pentecost is important to Christians. Younger pupils make excellent responses too saying that 'Jesus is in the hearts of fishermen' and 'when I am in church, I feel close to Jesus'. Pupils know how well they are doing and how to strengthen and deepen their understanding. The work in their books and in related artwork is outstanding and reflects the pride and joy they all take in their work.

All teachers show good religious education knowledge, and this strengthens pupils' own understanding. Pupils' thinking and discerning skills are effectively developed. The teaching staff form a very effective team drawing on the strengths of each other. Questioning skills are very well developed. Excellent strategies are employed to support all learning. Good examples can be seen in the effective use of talk partners and in the way they listen and share ideas. Excellent strategies are also seen in the way probing questions are made, 'what questions might the disciples ask of Jesus?'. As a result, pupils can make insightful responses, 'I don't have to be in church to be close to Jesus'. Support staff are very effective in their roles targeting

different groups. High expectations are made of each other as seen in the high quality of work around the school. All speak of how well they are supported and are highly appreciative of the senior leadership team. This is echoed by those new to teaching religious education. All say how they value the strong sense of team spirit, and the way faith is driven by the mission statement. The senior leadership team support the diocese in professional training and development for others. Parents speak overwhelmingly in their praise and support of the school, with one saying, 'religious education lies at the heart of the school'.

All leaders and governors prioritise the provision for religious education, the anchor of the school. This was eloquently reflected in their recent Ofsted report. The visionary headteacher combines her skills and deep faith with those of the considerable skills of the religious education lead teacher and the deputy headteacher in driving forward the excellence of provision at St. Mary's. Leaders and governors ensure that it has full parity with other subjects. Impressive cross curricula work, led by the headteacher, is seen in personal health and social education in the scheme 'I am special, I am me'. Excellent class reflections are made from a Catholic perspective. Leaders promote Forest Schools as an integral part of religious education. Work is carefully planned and delivered, remaining faithful to the Catholic ethos, all leaders are very effective in monitoring and evaluating provision for religious education. They know their school well and it informs and inspires them to drive the school forward. This is exemplified in the way they seek to deepen their understanding of scripture through their own professional development.

## Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

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

2

### 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

Prayer and liturgy are without doubt the thread binding together the Catholic ethos of St. Mary's. Pupils speak with joy and enthusiasm about the opportunities they have to celebrate in prayer, meditative silence, and reflection. This is exemplified in the weekly gospel assemblies in which they open up the word of God. Pupils see this as an opportunity to get to know Jesus more and to guide them in thought and action in the week ahead. In liturgical prayer celebrating the feast of the Ascension led by the headteacher, a prayerful and meditative atmosphere was seen to permeate the whole school. Pupils can sign their school mission statement, an example of how they strive to be a fully inclusive school. All pupils joyfully sing appropriate hymns, some chosen by Mini Vinnies. Pupils skilfully reflect on the events leading up to the feasts of Ascension and Pentecost, especially the scripture passages taken from the gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. Behaviour, and eagerness to respond to questioning, are excellent throughout the joyful celebration. In discussion with pupils, they know the importance of their roles in leading prayer and liturgy, selecting appropriate prayers, hymns, passages from scripture, and meditative silences. They are eager and confident to develop their roles further.

Provision is embedded throughout the day for opportunities of prayer and reflection, using pupils' own prayers and the traditional prayers of the Church. All staff are highly skilled in leading these and guiding the pupils in their roles, appropriate to their ages. Children in the early years are effectively guided in reflecting on the passages of scripture describing how the disciples said goodbye to Jesus. Older pupils show how they develop prayer trails and reflect on the stations of the cross in the school grounds. Forest school always includes prayer in pupils' reflections. Pupils are very effectively guided in prayer, evidenced in their own

celebration of the Ascension. They very effectively reflect on the beauty of God's creation and explore the symbols of clouds in scripture. All teachers are skilful in questioning and checking pupil responses to prayer and reflection in various settings. Pupils know that they can pray anywhere. Excellent resources support the prayer and liturgical life of the school. The school plays a leading role in sacramental preparation, bringing together the parish, parents, and school in a unified whole. All staff fully support this and are present in key celebrations together.

All leaders and governors are exemplary in the way they ensure prayer and liturgy is central to the life of the school. For instance, the liturgical year is fully planned for in the celebrations through the year. All leaders liaise closely with the parish priest so that Advent, Lent, and Reconciliation services take place during the year. Governors say how they are totally committed to not only developing pupils academically but spiritually too. The governors use their skills in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. One committee looks in detail at prayer and liturgy. They speak of this as a living and breathing reality running through the school. All governors and leaders are committed to providing high quality training for staff to deepen their understanding of scripture and how this impacts on the prayer life of the school. They are deeply committed to ensuring that this impacts on all and that they can 'celebrate everyone, whoever they are'.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	111357
Full postal address of the school	Rossall Grove, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH66 1NN
School phone number	0151 329 3524
Name of head teacher or principal	Mrs Helen Thorpe
Chair of governing board	Mr Francis Kwateng
School Website	<a href="http://www.stmaryoftheangels.co.uk">www.stmaryoftheangels.co.uk</a>
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Trustees	Diocese of Shrewsbury
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	June 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The inspection team

Kevin Toms	Lead inspector
Susan Ralph	Team inspector
Name of inspector	Lead/team
Name of inspector	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

