



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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DfES Number: 803 3300

Headteacher: Mrs Colleen Collett  
Chair of Governors: Mr Ian Plastow

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Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Clifton  
and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Date of inspection: 8 - 9 May 2007  
Date of previous inspection: 12 - 14 February 2001

Reporting Inspector: Mrs Mary Usher - Clark

## Description of School

St Mary's is an average size, Catholic primary school with 199 pupils on roll. 75% of pupils are baptized Catholic. Other faith backgrounds include Hindu and Muslim. 56% of school staff are Catholic. The school is within the parish of the Holy Family, though some 3 miles away from the church itself. There are few pupils entitled to free school meals and the number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are broadly average. Over the last three years the school has become more culturally diverse and a very small number of pupils are bilingual or acquiring English as their second language. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is between average and above average national expectations.

### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1: Outstanding;    Grade 2: Good;    Grade 3: Satisfactory;    Grade 4: Unsatisfactory

## Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

St Mary's is an outstanding Catholic primary school providing an excellent education. The school's shared mission statement "Achieve excellence from all for all in a Catholic environment where each individual is valued and respected" can be seen in every facet of the school's work. The whole school has an air of calm and tranquillity. Pupil's behaviour throughout the school is exemplary. They are well mannered and have respect and care for one another. The relationships between themselves and with all the adults in the school are outstanding. Equally, the pupil's standards and achievements are outstanding because the teaching and learning of religious education is of the highest standard. Pupils' subject knowledge is exceptionally good. Older pupils are able to discuss the fundamentals of other world religions and the youngest pupils are able to write their own prayers and know how to pray reverently. Pupils confidently lead prayers in whole school assemblies and respond well to short, impromptu dramas as aids to learning during their lessons. All parents interviewed were happy and agree that their children are "receiving the finest Catholic education". Also, that the school cares for their children as individuals and all staff are approachable at any time. Displays of pupil's work and prayer areas throughout the school are of the highest quality.

**Grade 1**

## Improvement since the last inspection

Improvement since the last inspection has been excellent. The school has replaced their previous scheme of work and mainly follows the Here I Am scheme now. Good recording and tracking procedures for RE are now in place throughout the school and are used well and the school has reviewed assessment in line with the Here I Am scheme. Parents are now more fully involved in their children's RE education and spiritual development.

**Grade 1**

## **The capacity of the school community to improve and develop**

The school has an excellent capacity to continue to improve and develop because of the outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher, very ably supported by the deputy headteacher and all the staff who work together as a fully cohesive team. The schools self-assessment is accurate; they know their strengths and areas to further develop.

**Grade 1**

## **What the school should do to improve further**

As identified by the school,

- Continue to introduce and embed the In The Beginning scheme as appropriate to the needs of the school
- Develop further the distributive leadership of RE

## **The Catholic Life of the School**

### **Leadership and Management**

The head teacher's clear vision and the effective promotion of moral and spiritual development are great strengths of the school. The stringent recruitment process of appointing new staff ensures that high standards and achievement, and the preservation of the catholicity of the school remain. The governing body ably fulfil their role. They are fully committed to the school's ethos and are a strong, hardworking team entirely supportive of the school. They are fully aware of the school's strengths and areas of development. The schools own self-assessment is accurate. Although almost half of the staff are not catholic, they receive excellent support and are encouraged to complete the five-day training programme with the diocese. All staff endorse the school's ethos and provide excellent role models taking a full part in all aspects of school life. Links with the feeder schools are strong and links with the parish of the Holy Family are as strong as the geographical restrictions allow. The limited liturgical support from the parish priest is shared between two schools.

**Grade 1**

### **The Prayer Life of the School**

Prayer is central to the life of the school. The spiritual development of the pupils throughout the school is outstanding. The frequency of opportunities and the quality of collective worship, prayer, and reflection are outstanding. All staff lead collective worship skilfully and the school follows closely the liturgical year. Whole school assemblies provide a quality time of coming together to share an act of worship as a whole school. Pupils took an active role in the very good assembly seen, demonstrating how our beliefs can influence the way we live. Pupils are able to discuss the meaning of Easter, Pentecost, important feast days and the significance of the month of May. Pupils enjoy the responsibility of organising reflections, making power point

presentations, writing prayers and performing short dramas for assemblies and for their own classes. Celebrations and performances at Easter and Christmas times follow different formats. For instance this Easter pupils performed the Trial of Jesus. Other years they have followed the Stations of the Cross or held a series of Lenten reflections. Parents are invited to and enjoy these occasions. The youngest pupils in foundation stage are familiar with prayers and know how to pray with reverence. They have the confidence to read their own prayers out in class. Parents have welcomed the usefulness of the prayer book that was sent home recently. The school is fortunate enough to have a chapel, used by classes for reflections and occasional lessons. The Parish priest, who is also a school governor, usually celebrates whole school masses on a twice-termly basis. In the past Feast days have been celebrated with a school Mass, however this may well change, as most Feast day celebrations will now move to Sundays. Pupils expressed an enjoyment of class masses, which are not held as frequently as they were, due to the work commitment of the parish priest.

**Grade 1**

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## **Religious Education**

### **Achievement and Standards in Religious Education**

The excellent achievement and standards in religious education are evident in pupil's work throughout the school. The work seen in books shows a high level of knowledge and understanding of religious education and how pupils relate the gospel values to their own lives. Work is well presented and very good progress can be seen in all year groups. Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and acknowledge that they are often "different and fun". Pupils are given appropriate challenge in their lessons and rise to the high expectations of their teachers. They work hard during lessons, and oral responses to the very good questioning techniques of all staff elicit mature, insightful responses. Pupils with learning difficulties, achieve as well as others, through the good support of experienced learning support assistants. Older pupils enjoy the responsibility of "buddying" younger pupils. Older pupils are able to say that they "care for and respect one another". They enjoy supporting many charities during the school year and particularly enjoyed serving "FairTrade" coffee at a recent coffee morning for parents. They explained how these products help the third world and encouraged their parents to use Fair Trade products at home.

**Grade 1**

### **Teaching and learning in Religious Education**

The majority of lessons were outstanding, and there was nothing less than good in the six sessions seen. Pupils' interest was held by appealing lesson content, for example, work on sports celebrities' talents. Pupils responded well to the good pace of the lesson and their teachers effective questioning. Pupils demonstrated a great depth of feeling and compassion in the written work they completed during the lesson. In another outstanding lesson pupils questioned "Barnabus" as to how he felt when he sold his field to help the poor. High expectations of pupils' ability ensure work is of the highest quality. Pupils recognised that all their teachers had "different strengths and talents". Work is well marked often offering pupils good guidance as to how they can further improve their work. Teachers are aware of pupil's different learning styles and plan their lessons accordingly. Equally, following the regular assessments of pupils work, lessons are adapted to support the learning needs of individuals.

Groups of pupils and individuals are well supported within their lessons by high quality learning support assistants. Good use is made of ICT as a teaching tool; pupils enjoy their lessons and exhibit excellent attitudes to work. All classrooms are bright and attractive environments with outstanding displays and good resources, which enhance all pupils learning. Each classroom has a high quality reflection area and pupils understand its purpose.

**Grade 1**

### **Quality of the Curriculum**

The school follows the recommended diocesan scheme, Here I Am. The RE work on display throughout the school and the work in pupil's books illustrates the strong links made across most different subject areas. The use of ICT with RE can be seen throughout the work of each pupil. The school is introducing the In The Beginning scheme as an additional resource, where appropriate, enhancing the already successful way personal, social and health education is taught. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is a strength of the school. The curriculum suits the needs of all groups of pupils, being adapted accordingly.

**Grade 1**

### **Leadership and management of Religious Education**

Pupils and staff perceive religious education as a core subject. The teaching and learning of RE was well monitored last year. The headteacher and subject leaders monitor work in books each year. Subject leaders support staff very well providing excellent training opportunities during staff meetings and dedicated training days. All pupils are given the opportunity to reach their full potential. Appropriate resources are used particularly well during class reflection times. Outside, further quiet areas are planned in the very attractive grounds. The new building extension will provide further teaching areas and a much-needed library/resource area.

**Grade 1**