



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

School: St. Mary's R.C. Primary School  
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URN: 126482  
DfES Number: 865/5208

Headteacher: Mr. Stephen Riley  
Chair of Governors: Mr Evan James

Date of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> March 2008  
Date of previous inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> April 2002  
Reporting Inspector: Mr. P. Bates

## **Description of School**

St Mary's is an average sized primary school catering for pupils aged 4-11 years. It is situated on the western side of Chippenham and serves the extensive parish of St. Mary's. The school is held in trust by the Religious Order of 'The Poor Servants of the Mother of God', who founded the school. It is a popular, oversubscribed school with 260 pupils on roll, of whom 71% are Catholics. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage and come from mixed social and economic backgrounds. The number of pupils on a Special Needs Register is below the national average, although the number with statements is average. Attainment on entry is varied but broadly at the level expected.

### **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 school, committed to excellence in spiritual, moral and religious education. Through the commitment of everyone within the community and the drive, vision and inspirational leadership of the head teacher, the school lives out its Catholic mission very well. The school has a welcoming environment and all within it are very proud of the school. Leaders at all levels have a strong commitment to the Catholic life. The school enjoys the full support of the parents and has a pivotal role within the parish. Pastoral care is excellent and pupils' emotional well being is supported through a curriculum rich in opportunities for spiritual development. Pupils of all abilities make good progress due to effective teaching. Good assessment procedures are in place to drive progress and these are being further developed. Prayer underpins the life of the school and pupils participate in many forms of worship. The spiritual and moral development of the pupils is outstanding. Pupils are rightly proud of their school. One pupil summed it up "This school is special, we share and care for each other."

**Grade: 1**

## **Improvement since the last inspection**

All the areas identified for development in the last inspection have been successfully addressed. The Deputy Head has been appointed as the R.E. Co-ordinator. End of unit assessments are carried out and the co-ordinator carries out oral assessment to ensure concepts have been understood. Each pupil has an R.E. folder which contains evidence of work that has been undertaken.

**Grade: 1**

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

The school has an excellent capacity to improve further. The strong and clearly focused leadership is constantly striving for improvement in all aspects of the Catholic life of the school and in raising standards and achievement in Religious Education. The Governing Body is highly supportive, committed and capable of developing strategies for improvement. The close co-operation of the whole school team including staff, governors, parents and parish is a large factor in the maintenance of existing good practice and further development.

**Grade: 1**

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

- 1 Implement a scheme of work for Relationship Education
  - 2 Further develop the assessment procedures already in place to include the levelling of pupils' work
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## **The Catholic Life of the School**

### **Leadership and Management**

The leadership of the Headteacher is outstanding. In his role as spiritual leader of the school community he is committed to maintaining and developing the distinctly Catholic identity which is St. Mary's. Together with his deputy head, senior leadership team and governors, and strongly supported by staff, he has forged a strong and effective team. This has a distinct impact on the life and work of the school. The Mission Statement has recently been reviewed by a group of governors and staff. It is a powerful document that puts Jesus Christ at the centre of all that happens in school. Governors provide excellent support. They play an active role in the work of the school through visits, committees and attendance at school events. They have an extremely good knowledge of policy and practice and effectively ensure, through regular reports, that the Catholic life of the school is developed. The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor in the school, playing an important role in the religious life of staff and pupils. The leadership of the school effectively promotes the school's partnership with the parish which has resulted in the development of excellent links and has led to the school being seen as firmly rooted within the local Eucharistic community. This has a significant impact on the strong ethos of the school.

**Grade: 1**

## **Collective Worship**

The quality and provision for personal and collective worship is outstanding. A varied programme of Masses and assemblies place worship and prayer at the very heart of the community. Excellent opportunities are provided for pupils to participate fully in liturgy. The school Mass held during the inspection involved pupils reading, singing and playing musical instruments. It was very well planned and age appropriate. Throughout, pupils were attentive, prayerful and responsive. As a preparation for Easter the school choir led a performance of 'Palms to Passion' in the parish church. It consisted of readings and songs taking us through Holy Week. It was a very spiritual occasion with high quality singing.

Prayer is central to the life of the school. Prayers are said at relevant times throughout the day and are an integral part of the religious education lessons. Pupils have a sound knowledge of formal prayers and are also encouraged to compose their own. They are also given opportunities for periods of quiet reflection. The prayer areas in all classes are, without exception, of high quality, age appropriate and relevant. They are well used and are a focus for the prayer life of the class. The school also benefits from a beautiful "Prayer Room". This is used by classes for periods of reflection and prayer and extremely sensibly by pupils during the lunch break. Teachers use a range of prayer styles, appropriate to the pupils' age and ability. Their responses during worship are meaningful, relevant and powerful. Parents and parishioners are invited to various Acts of Collective Worship and they comment with enthusiasm on the high quality. The contribution of Collective Worship to the pupils' spiritual and moral development is significant.

**Grade: 1**

## **Community Cohesion**

The school provides community cohesion to a high level. It is a fundamental aspect of the work of the school. Procedures are in place to take account of the views of pupils, parents and parish. The school celebrates diversity and has various international links which give pupils an excellent awareness of how people's lives differ depending on religious, social, cultural and economic circumstances. The school ensures that educational visits and visitors into school deepen the pupils' understanding of other cultures and communities. The school actively supports many charities. It has strong links with a mission in Kenya, supports CAFOD, CLIC, and the Catholic Children's Society amongst others. Much of the charitable work is pupil initiated. All members of the school community are quick to show concern for the well being of others. The strong 'Buddy System' in school helps pupils to understand the importance of helping and supporting others as well as making new pupils feel welcome.

**Grade: 1**

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## **Religious Education**

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

Pupils' attainment when they come into school is broadly average and by the time they reach Year 6 they are performing at a high level. Progress is consistent and sustained across all classes. Standards closely match those in literacy. The high attaining pupils achieve at a consistently high level. Pupils are able to articulate clearly what they have learnt, express opinions, discuss collaboratively and work independently. Those with special educational needs make similar levels of progress as other pupils. The behaviour of the pupils when listening to the teacher is excellent. They are enthusiastic about sharing their thoughts and ideas. When working co-operatively and independently during the lessons observed, pupils were focused and diligent. Teachers set challenging tasks, particularly for the more able. One young group were asked at the end of a lesson, "What do you know about Jesus that you didn't before?" One pupil gave a deep and thoughtful answer "He was like us, he had feelings and emotions." Religious Education work is well presented by pupils and their individual portfolios show evidence of progress. Developmental marking is constructive and serves to extend pupils' understanding. The use of 'Quality Marking' sheets gives both teachers and pupils an opportunity to comment on topics covered. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The composition of prayers and Lenten promises is evidence of the pupils' depth of thought and ideas.

**Grade: 1**

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

The quality of teaching and learning overall is very good with many outstanding features. It is marked by good planning and pace, high expectations and challenging activities which engage pupils' interest. All lessons have clear learning intentions which are articulated to pupils. These are referred to throughout the lesson in order to keep pupils focused.

Very good classroom management and the excellent use of questioning skills are evident throughout the school. Teachers use a variety of approaches and activities in order to make lessons interesting and encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning where appropriate. Well directed teaching assistants reinforce and support learning effectively. High quality ICT resources are used in a stimulating way and have a very positive effect. Pupils' work is displayed to high standards, demonstrating the high profile Religious Education has across the school. Effective systems for monitoring and evaluating the standards of teaching and learning are in place and are being further developed by the introduction of the levelling of pupils' work. Parents receive regular newsletters to inform them of future Religious Education topics and events. In addition they are given opportunities to discuss their child's work at Open Evenings. They comment that their children become confident and flourish because of the outstanding teaching and learning opportunities offered.

**Grade: 1**

## **Quality of the Curriculum**

The school follows the diocesan approved programme “Here I Am” and sufficient time is allocated to the subject. Curriculum planning is excellent and ensures full access for all pupils. Emphasis is placed on content which is relevant to the pupils’ lives and experiences. Creative cross-curricular links are a key feature of lessons, especially the use of ICT, art, drama and literacy. The evidence of work in portfolios confirms this. The school does not have a Relationship Scheme of Work but addresses issues within the existing curriculum. In Years 5 and 6 use is made of the sex education programme “Made in the Image of God.” This is shared with parents and monitored by the co-ordinator. The school should consider introducing the diocesan relationship programme “In the Beginning” to ensure coverage throughout the school. Knowledge and understanding of other faiths is covered as they occur in the ‘Here I Am’ scheme. This is supplemented by visitors from other religions, relevant assemblies and lessons on topics such as ‘The Shabbat Meals’ and ‘Ramadan’. Pupils show interest in other faiths and are able to talk about them in considerable depth. Religious Education is well resourced with a wide range of books and artefacts available to support the teaching. At least one in-service day is provided to support Religious Education. The one held last summer on ‘Spirituality in the Curriculum’ was led by Bishop Declan and supported by staff from other schools in the diocese.

**Grade: 2**

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

Governors, head, teachers and staff share a common vision of the importance of religious education and provide clear direction for the subject. The head teacher has a dynamic drive for the subject which ensures that Religious Education is given the status of a core subject. He is very well supported by the hard-working deputy head teacher who is also the R.E. co-ordinator. They inspire, motivate and model very good practice. The support they give to other staff has a significant impact on teachers’ confidence and performance.

New staff are well supported in their work and there is an induction programme in place. A programme of in-service training addresses the developmental needs of staff while the culture of sharing good practice ensures teachers gain expertise from one another. The co-ordinator regularly attends diocesan meetings and together with the head teacher is instrumental in moving policy into practice. The governors discharge their responsibilities very effectively. They are supportive, enthusiastic and provide a good level of challenge. The school recognises that the role of the new link governor for Religious Education needs to be developed. The dedication and commitment of the Catholic leadership in the school are key facts in the pupils’ high achievements.

**Grade: 1**