



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## INSPECTION REPORT

### ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL DUDLEY

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Inspection dates November 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> 2006  
Reporting Inspector Marian Jay

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Type of School              | Primary   |
| Age range of pupils         | 4-11 years  |
| Number on roll              | 176   |
| Appropriate authority       | The governing body  |
| Chair of governors          | Fr. John Darley   |
| School address              | Mill Street,<br>Brierley Hill,<br>West Midlands,<br>DY5 2TH |
| Telephone number            | 01384 818435  |
| Fax number                  | 01384 818436  |
| E-mail address              | amaher@st-mary-bh.dudley.gov.uk                             |
| Parish                      | St. Mary, Brierley Hill                                     |
| Date of previous inspection | October 2002  |

**Headteacher Ms A Maher**

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## Description of the school

St. Mary's is a smaller than average sized primary school in Brierley Hill, West Midlands. There are currently 176 children on roll of whom 130 are baptised Catholics. A number of children are from travelling families. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is 18%, slightly above the national average. 22% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs and 4 have statements. Eight per cent of pupils are learning English as an additional language. When pupils start school, children's attainment is below national expectations.

## Key for inspection grades

|         |                |
|---------|----------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding    |
| Grade 2 | Good           |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory   |
| Grade 4 | Unsatisfactory |

## Overall effectiveness of the school

St. Mary's is a very good Catholic school with some outstanding features. It has a friendly and welcoming atmosphere where pupils feel well supported and this provides a good climate for learning. Surveys of parents/carers opinion indicate that parents are very happy with the school and the religious education (RE) provided for their children. The school works in close partnership with parents, the parish and other local schools. Pupil behaviour is excellent and they very much enjoy their work in RE. The school's strong Catholic ethos pervades every aspect of school life. RE permeates the whole curriculum and is underpinned by the school's clear mission statement. The headteacher's leadership is very good. She is ably supported by the other members of the senior leadership team. Together they have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and developmental needs.

**Grade: 2**

## Improvement since the last inspection

St. Mary's has successfully acted upon the area identified for improvement in the previous inspection report. A target for improvement in RE in the coming year is included in each child's annual report.

**Grade: 2**

## Capacity to improve

The headteacher and her staff have a strong commitment to school improvement guided by the school's mission statement. They have a very good understanding of what needs to be improved and how to achieve it derived from the school's own evaluation. They are well supported by the governors and the well-informed chair of governors. The newly appointed senior leadership team has the ability, enthusiasm and determination to bring about further improvements.

**Grade: 1**

## What the school should do to improve further

- Fully implement the planned programme of family life education.
- Develop pupils' awareness of being part of a multi-faith and multi-cultural community at home and abroad.
- Develop the involvement of pupils in assessing their own learning.

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

### **Leadership and Management**

The school has evaluated its leadership and management of RE and the Catholic life as good. Inspection evidence indicates that they are very good. The governing body is experienced, very committed and well-informed. Under the knowledgeable leadership of the parish priest, who is also the chair of governors, they fulfil their role very well in relation to support and challenge and the school's Catholic foundation. The headteacher has a clear vision of the Catholic life of this school and the development needs of RE as a subject. She is very well supported in her leadership and management role by the RE co-ordinator and other members of the leadership team. Together they promote a gentle spirituality where every member of the school community feels loved and valued. Every action of the headteacher and her staff is guided by the school's mission statement and aims. The school has good links with other local Catholic schools and joins with them for staff training. Excellent links exist with the parish. Effective management systems are in place for the monitoring and evaluation of RE, pupils' spiritual development and the Catholic life of the school. The management and provision of resources to support the spiritual life of the school are good.

**Grade: 2**

### **Collective Worship**

Provision for collective worship is outstanding. Mass is celebrated each week and pupils prepare and actively participate in the celebrations, for example through the imaginative use of role play to interpret the Gospel, providing musical accompaniment to the singing and taking on other roles of responsibility during the service. During a whole school assembly led by the headteacher on the theme of remembrance, pupils were given the opportunity to make their own personal contribution to this act of worship by bringing up poppies displaying the names of those people they especially wished to be remembered. Pupils know the responses well and pray with reverence. They pray regularly every day, at the start and end of the day, before and after meals and at the beginning and end of RE lessons. Each class has a prayer focus that can be used by them for personal prayer throughout the day, with a basket in which they can place their own prayers or intentions. Prayer life is good; it includes penitential services, prayer services, the Stations of the Cross during Lent, and the praying of the Rosary in October for parents and children in the Marian garden. The allocation of a prayer partner from a different year group provides children with another layer of support in their prayer life. Carefully selected music and the use of ICT frequently enhance the prayerful experiences for pupils. This is reinforced by teachers demonstrating a living of their faith and love of prayer. There are good links between the school and parish. Parents, carers and parishioners support the school at many of the services. The structured programme for sacramental preparation involves the home and the school working in close collaboration, supported by the parish priest. The provision for collective worship makes an effective contribution to children's spiritual and moral development.

**Grade: 1**

## **Religious Education**

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

Achievement throughout the school is good and standards in religious education are at least in line with diocesan expectations. Pupils' attitudes to RE are excellent and they enjoy their lessons. In the lessons observed and in discussions with pupils the children displayed a good knowledge and understanding of RE. Behaviour is outstanding. They know the prayers that they say regularly in school and become capable of writing their own reflective prayers. Standards are good and pupils

learn well as a result of the good teaching and use of interesting ways to encourage them to learn. The use of ICT is being integrated and further developed to support the teaching and learning. The good standard and range of work seen in their RE books is comparable to that in literacy, with no apparent gender difference or difference in progress made by different ability groups.

**Grade: 2**

## **Quality of Provision for Religious Education**

### **Teaching and Learning**

The quality of the teaching and learning is good with some outstanding features, enabling pupils to make effective progress. This is consistent with the judgement made by the school. Some teaching is very good because the children are excited by the variety of activities planned for them, including role play, hot seating, chat show interviews and singing. All teachers have good subject knowledge. Most lessons are conducted at a good pace which maintains pupils' interest and concentration, keeping them motivated and on task. Where teaching is satisfactory, the pace of the lesson is too slow and the children can become restless. Teaching assistants effectively support the learning of the children they are working with. Reflective prayer is used effectively at the beginning and end of RE lessons to reinforce the learning and create a positive classroom climate. Good use is made of ICT and music in most lessons to support the learning. The sharing of learning objectives is a common feature of all lessons; however, more use could be made of these during the plenary to aid pupil self-assessment. Marking is done regularly and is positive, usually developmental and guides pupils on what they need to do to further improve. Good systems are in place for the monitoring and assessment of pupil progress, leading to tasks that are mostly well matched to pupils' needs with the correct degree of challenge. Excellent relationships between staff and children promote good behaviour and a supportive, purposeful learning environment.

### **Curriculum**

The curriculum is based on the diocesan strategy for RE and is well planned. The time allocation for RE meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and the curriculum meets the expectations of the *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education*. Equal access to the curriculum is provided for all pupils. The school is in the early stages of implementing a new family life and sex education programme across Key Stages 1 and 2, entitled 'Family Life'. The school has already identified it as a priority for future development in the current school improvement plan. This programme has been welcomed by parents, staff and the parish priest and early indications are that its implementation will lead to even closer working links with the wider parish community. The RE curriculum is enriched through visits to places of worship and Catholic heritage. An awareness of other faiths and our multi-cultural world is apparent within school. Spiritual and moral development of pupils is very good. Pupils show a respect and care for each other and the adults they come into contact with. Good arrangements and resources are in place to support parents/carers in helping pupils prepare to receive the sacraments. Provision for prayer is very good in the school. The school council plays an active role in the running of the school, helping to organise charitable events, and pupils generously support those less fortunate than themselves.

**Grade: 2**

### **Leadership and Management of Religious Education**

Leadership and management of religious education are good. The subject leader works in close co-operation with the headteacher and parish priest to provide very effective leadership and good teaching and learning in RE. Rigorous monitoring and assessment procedures enable the leadership team to have an accurate knowledge of standards across the school and a clear vision for improvement. A portfolio of monitored work helps support quality assurance and a shared

understanding of standards. Good assessment records are kept for all pupils. Regular reports are made to the full governing body; they make regular monitoring visits to the school and effectively discharge their responsibilities for the leadership and management of religious education. Resources are good and the accommodation effectively meets the needs of the pupils. Appropriate statues, pictures, crucifixes, religious displays and artefacts are very visible around the school. Close links with the parish for sacramental preparation are supported by the RE co-ordinator through Masses and Eucharistic Services, these are held both in school and in Church. RE permeates all aspects of school life and is not just confined to RE lessons.

**Grade: 2**

**INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS**

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| <b>Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 unsatisfactory.</b> | <b>School Overall</b> |
|---|-----------------------|

**Overall Effectiveness**

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>The overall effectiveness of the provision for the Catholic life of the school and religious education</b> | <b>2</b> |
| The effectiveness of any steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection                         | <b>2</b> |
| The capacity to make necessary improvements   | <b>1</b> |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation   | <b>2</b> |

**The Catholic Life of the School**

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in developing the Catholic life of the school</b>                                       | <b>2</b> |
| How well the governing body fulfils its role in relation to the school's Catholic foundation  | <b>2</b> |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality care and education | <b>2</b> |
| The quality of the leadership of the headteacher and senior staff in leading and developing the Catholic life of the school               | <b>1</b> |
| How effectively leadership at all levels in the school promotes learners' spiritual and moral development                                 | <b>2</b> |
| How effectively the school monitors and evaluates its Catholic life   | <b>2</b> |

**Collective Worship**

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>The quality of Collective Worship</b>  | <b>1</b> |
| The quality of the provision for prayer, collective worship and the liturgical life of the school | <b>1</b> |
| Pupils' response to the school's provision  | <b>1</b> |
| How well collective worship contributes to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils      | <b>1</b> |

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION****Achievement and standards**

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>How well pupils achieve</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| The standards reached by pupils in RE                                       | <b>2</b> |
| Pupils' progress in their work  | <b>2</b> |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | <b>2</b> |
| How well pupils enjoy their work in RE                                      | <b>1</b> |
| The contribution pupils make to the school community                        | <b>2</b> |
| Pupils' behaviour   | <b>1</b> |

**Quality of Provision**

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Quality of provision for religious education</b>                              | <b>2</b> |
| How well teaching promotes good learning in RE and meets the needs of all pupils | <b>2</b> |
| How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs                                      | <b>2</b> |
| How well provision promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development              | <b>2</b> |

**Leadership and Management of RE**

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management of RE</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| How well the subject leader supports and leads staff in raising achievement and promoting high quality RE | <b>2</b> |
| How well performance is monitored and evaluated leading to clear priorities for improvement               | <b>2</b> |
| The adequacy and management of resources for RE   | <b>2</b> |
| The extent to which governors discharge their responsibilities towards religious education                | <b>2</b> |