



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 145382

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of East Anglia

16 April 2026 – 17 April 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

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

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education RE

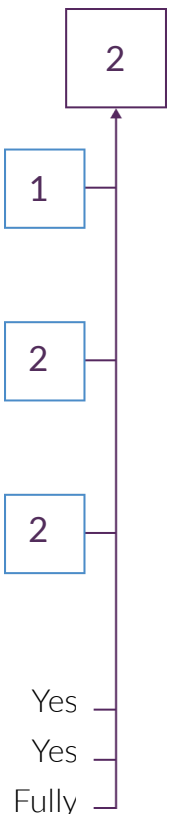
Collective worship (p.7)

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

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



Yes

Yes

Fully

What the school does well

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They are articulate and confident young people who are extremely respectful towards others and enthusiastic in their support of and participation in the Catholic life and mission of the school.
- Leaders and staff are exemplary role models who effectively witness to the school's Catholic mission through their commitment to the care of all pupils and to fostering high-quality relationships.
- The teaching of religious education is good, with pupils achieving well and enjoying their lessons.
- High quality music enhances the prayer life of the school as pupils sing and play instruments with great joy and enthusiasm.
- Parents value the sense of community and the inclusive nature of the school and are confident that their children are guided and supported in their personal and spiritual development.

What the school needs to improve

- Provide opportunities for pupils to take a proactive role and exercise greater autonomy in planning and leading outreach and charitable activities to deepen their understanding of Catholic Social Teaching.
- Provide training and support to enable teachers to effectively match learning objectives to appropriate tasks that enable pupils to demonstrate their understanding of each branch of the Religious Education Directory.
- Provide formation for staff and pupils so that they can confidently plan, lead and evaluate high quality prayer and liturgy which leads to full, active and conscious participation

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

Pupil outcomes

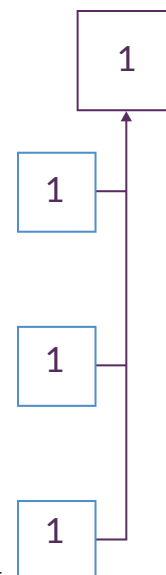
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



Pupils are extremely proud of being part of the St Mary's school family and understand the school's mission statement, *'Living and learning through faith'*, and how it supports and directs their actions. Relationships are strong and positive; pupils have a clear understanding that they are valued as unique children of God. As a result, they are happy, enjoy school and feel cared for. Pupils consistently express enthusiasm for their school and recognise that staff support them in striving for their best. Pupils understand their responsibility to make a difference in the world, as reflected in comments such as, "We can spread Jesus' message." They recognise that by following the principles of Catholic Social Teaching they can grow closer to God. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They demonstrate respect for themselves and others and are aware that all are part of God's family. Pupils value the range of leadership opportunities available, including Mini Vinnies, Worship Council, Play Leaders and School Councillors, and are beginning to take an active part in planning and leading events.

St Mary's is a school where the mission statement underpins every facet of school life; it is widely known, lived and witnessed by all members of the school community. There is a very strong sense of community due to the culture of welcome and the high quality of relationships, and it is clearly evident that Christ is at the centre of the school. Staff embrace the school's mission and Catholic identity of the school and are exemplary role models in their consistent support, care and love for pupils. One parent summarised the views of many by describing St Mary's as being 'like a family' with parents recognising staff are dedicated and care about every pupil. Inclusion and high-quality pastoral care are central to school life, with pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, welcomed and effectively supported throughout the

day. Staff also value the support and care they receive from leaders. The school environment reflects its Catholic character through high-quality displays that showcase the religious education curriculum and celebrate the prayer life of the school.

Leaders, including governors, are inspirational witnesses to the Gospel and to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. The co-headteachers are highly respected, embody servant leadership and ensure that all members of the community feel supported and valued. Consequently, staff feel encouraged and enthusiastic in their commitment to the Catholic mission of the school. There is a flourishing partnership between the parish and the school, with the parish priest actively involved in school life. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and appreciate the support they receive. One parent commented, "This is a wonderful school with Catholic values at the heart of every aspect of school life." Families feel welcomed into the school for liturgical celebrations such as Masses and seasonal events and value the communication they receive. Governors are regular visitors to the school and have a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development, enabling them to provide both support and challenge. Teachers have benefitted from professional development opportunities focused on the Catholic life and mission of the school and are confident in their understanding of its purpose. Leaders and governors ensure that evaluation of Catholic life is systematic and effective in identifying strengths and areas for continued development.

Religious education

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

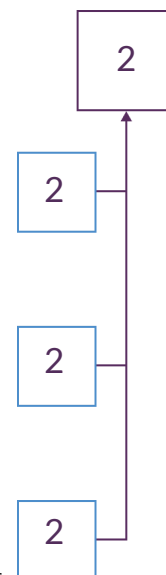
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons at St Mary's and engage well in their learning. As a result, behaviour in lessons is exemplary. Pupils demonstrate good concentration, remain engaged and enjoy the challenge of learning in religious education, for example, in Year 5, pupils listen carefully to explanations of key vocabulary related to Confirmation. Consequently, pupils demonstrate good religious literacy and talk about their learning with confidence. By the time pupils leave the school, they achieve high standards because they make good progress in all year groups. Pupils' work is generally well presented, and there is a wide range of activities, including art, extended written work and drama, for pupils to demonstrate their learning. This ensures that pupils continue to develop secure knowledge and understanding of scripture and religious education themes building effectively on prior learning, for example, Year 6 pupils make links to prior learning about Pentecost when discussing how the Holy Spirit supports them to witness to Christ. Pupils respond well to feedback and understand how to improve their work.

Teachers are committed to the value of religious education and share high expectations with pupils. They have strong subject knowledge, which is continually enhanced through ongoing training and support from the Trust and subject leaders. Teachers plan carefully so that each branch of the curriculum builds on prior learning and provides opportunities for pupils to express their understanding in a variety of ways. The curriculum has been adapted to meet the needs of pupils; however, there are occasions where tasks are not matched closely enough to learning objectives, limiting pupils' ability to demonstrate what they are expected

to learn. Scripture is at the heart of teaching and is shared effectively through discussion and multimedia. In most lessons, teachers use effective questioning, creative approaches to explaining scripture and focused discussion of vocabulary to deepen pupils' understanding, for example, in a Year 1 lesson on the Ascension, pupils accurately recall key events and identify the central message that Jesus returned to the Father and promised to send support to his disciples. Feedback is relevant and purposeful, enabling pupils to reflect on and improve their learning.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that religious education is central to the curriculum and delivered to a high standard. It is a faithful expression of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* and is given equal status with other core subjects in terms of training, resources and strategic development. Subject leaders have a clear vision for the on-going development of the curriculum and provide effective guidance and professional development. There is a culture of continuous improvement with teachers benefitting from working in collaboration with other schools within the Trust and attendance at Diocesan training. Staff appreciate opportunities to work with other Trust schools to further develop curriculum planning and resourcing, recognising the positive impact on their subject knowledge and teaching. Leaders are aware of the inconsistency in the quality of teaching of religious education, however actions taken have not yet had the necessary impact to ensure all teaching is of the highest standard. The school has planned enrichment activities including visits to the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham and input from the chaplaincy team of St Albans' Catholic High School. Leaders and governors' evaluation is effective in identifying areas for improvement and strengths in the teaching of religious education.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

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

2

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

3

2

Pupils respond well to the experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school, demonstrating a respectful attitude. They join in communal prayer with confidence and sing with great joy and enthusiasm. A particular strength of the school is its music provision; the quality of singing and instrumental playing is outstanding and makes a significant contribution to the liturgical life of the school and parish. Pupils involved in music are positive role models for others through their enthusiasm and evident pride in leading worship. Pupils are keen to take on ministries, including reading at Mass. Worship Council members are committed to leading class prayer and times of prayer for others. They are developing the skills to deliver pre-planned prayer effectively; however, they have limited formation and opportunities to independently plan and lead prayer and celebrations of the Word. Pupils can articulate how prayer influences their lives, and parents report that pupils are keen to share the prayers they have learnt in school at home.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school, and are supported by an embedded daily pattern of prayer signalled by the ringing of a prayer bell. The calendar for prayer and liturgy is well planned and reflects the liturgical year. Weekly Gospel assemblies focus on the Sunday readings and provide the school community with a mission for the week. Pupils have regular opportunities to attend Mass and to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent. Senior leaders model prayer and liturgy through leading whole-school assemblies and supporting the Worship Council. Staff are developing their skills in supporting pupils to plan and lead prayer and liturgy. Prayer experiences are appropriate and reflect key aspects of the Catholic tradition, although there is further scope to deepen variety. Staff and

leaders ensure that each classroom has a holy space that pupils care for and use for daily prayer. There are also a number of holy spaces across the school that provide additional opportunities for prayer. Families are effectively included in the prayer life of the school through invitations to assemblies and liturgical celebrations, which they value highly.

Leaders and governors have formulated a clear Prayer and Liturgy Policy, including a calendar of planned opportunities for collective worship. These include classes attending weekly parish Mass, celebrations of holy days of obligation and the school's patronal feast of St Mary in May. These opportunities strengthen the school's identity and bring the community together. Leaders have considered progression in pupils' participation in prayer and liturgy according to age and capacity and continue to embed these principles. Published schemes are used to deliver many assemblies; however, these are not always adapted sufficiently to reflect the diverse needs of the community. This leads to some variation in the quality of experience and engagement and contributes to a limited range of prayer forms. Staff have had limited professional development, including formation, in planning and leading effective prayer and celebration of the Word. Consequently, they are not confident in developing these skills with pupils. Leaders and governors monitor the prayer life of the school and are beginning to evaluate it.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	145382
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9353340
Full postal address of the school	Woodbridge Road, Ipswich, IP4 4EU
School phone number	01473 728372
Headteacher or Head of School	Mrs Josephine Measham, Mrs Joanne Berry
Chair of Governors	Mrs Angela Bull
School Website	www.stmaryscatholicprimaryipswich.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	"Our Lady of Walsingham"
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	17 April 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The Inspection Team

Ursula Clark Lead

Felicity Hope

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