



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 401082

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Cardiff-Menevia

10 June 2026 – 11 June 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

2

1

2

2

Yes

Yes

Fully

What the school does well

- St Mary's is a welcoming, joyful, and inclusive Catholic community. Pupils are proud and happy to be part of St Mary's and they feel safe, nurtured, and valued. Good relations are a strength of the school, leading to a strong sense of community, and there is a highly effective partnership between school, home, and parish, which contributes well to pupils' spiritual formation.
- Catholic life and mission is a strength of the school, shaping a faith-filled community where Gospel values are embedded in daily life. Christ is clearly at the core of school life.
- Leaders, governors, and staff are committed to the mission of the Church, bearing witness to the school's Catholic life and mission, and are positive role models for pupils, showing love and care.
- Within religious education (RE) pupils are developing very good knowledge, understanding, and skills, and the way that the principles of Catholic social teaching and the Pupil Profile virtues have been skilfully interwoven into the curriculum and the life of the school is particularly impressive.
- Prayer and liturgy at St Mary's is a central part of school life and most pupils respond positively to the opportunities provided.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance and extend teaching and learning within RE to allow greater scope for independent learning and challenge, in order to further pupil attainment.
- Further develop collective worship experiences to ensure more pupil involvement, in order to create engaging, dynamic experiences that inspire all pupils.
- Effective reflection by all stakeholders would ensure that the Catholic self-evaluation document (CSED) provides an accurate and evidence-based account of the school's current position and the rationale underpinning its judgements.

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

1

1

1

1

The mission of the Church is integral to all aspects of school life at St Mary's Catholic Primary School. The mission statement, 'As a Catholic family we will do our best to live and learn as Christ taught us,' is clearly reflected in its daily experiences, relationships, and practices. Pupils are encouraged to follow the example of Jesus in their words and actions, with Gospel values embedded across the curriculum and wider school life. As a result, pupils are happy and confident, and feel safe and secure, recognising that they are valued as unique individuals made in the image and likeness of God. One pupil commented, 'We are always encouraged to be the best we can be and reach our full potential. This school helps us to have a better attitude.' Pupils demonstrate strong moral development, showing kindness, forgiveness, and respect as they grow in virtue and develop into caring, responsible members of society. They actively live out their faith through pupil leadership groups such as Mini Vinnies, Wellbeing and Eco Warriors, and through charitable and parish initiatives. Pupils confidently articulate key principles of Catholic social teaching and apply them in their daily actions. The Catholic Pupil Profile is highly visible and fully embedded, reinforcing these values across the school.

St Mary's is an exceptionally strong Catholic community, deeply rooted in tradition and lived practice. Staff are exemplary role models who consistently and visibly promote the school's Catholic ethos, making a significant contribution to prayer, liturgy, and the rich provision of parish and community events. The partnership with the parish is a key strength of the school. Clergy are highly visible and play a central role in the life and mission of the school through regular celebration of Mass, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and engagement with pupils to

deepen their understanding of the sacraments. This mutually supportive relationship ensures that the school is recognised as integral to the mission of the parish, with clergy expressing great pride in the faith witness of the school community and its active involvement in parish life. The school community is notably welcoming, inclusive, and Christ-centred. All staff demonstrate a strong commitment to pupils' well-being through regular check-ins and tailored support. The learning environment is thoughtfully developed and authentically Catholic, with high-quality displays and class-selected Scripture prominently reinforcing the centrality of faith in daily life. Provision for relationships and sex education enables pupils to develop a secure, age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships rooted firmly in Catholic teaching.

Leaders and governors demonstrate a deep-rooted commitment to promoting the Catholic life and mission of the school, which is reflected in its policies and procedures. They respond proactively to diocesan policies and initiatives, engaging in diocesan courses, retreats, and conferences, and working effectively in partnership with the wider cluster to enhance provision and share best practice. Partnership with the parish is a strength. Leaders, governors, and clergy work collaboratively to support and enrich the spiritual development of the school community. This is exemplified through initiatives such as a weekly 'Sneak Peek' of the Gospel during Friday assemblies, which prepares pupils thoughtfully for Sunday worship. Leaders and governors actively promote strong parental engagement, recognising parents as key partners in faith formation. As one parent commented, 'Joining the school for Mass and worship is a great opportunity for me to see how the staff support me in raising my family in the Catholic faith.' The school's work on Catholic social teaching and the Pupil Profile virtues is exemplary and embedded across the curriculum. Staff voice is valued and contributes to a supportive environment. RE is prioritised, with regular discussion and reporting to governors who are knowledgeable and committed to their roles.

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

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2

2

Pupils make strong progress in their knowledge and understanding, building effectively on their starting points as they move through the school, and produce work of a good standard. Pupils demonstrate secure religious literacy, speaking confidently about their learning, with a clear awareness of key concepts and accurate use of subject-specific vocabulary such as 'evangelisation' and 'encyclical'. Pupils enjoy RE and benefit from a range of opportunities for extended writing and creativity, including art appreciation, the use of ICT, cross-curricular 'Curious Quests', and engaging with the 'New You Dance' company based on *Religious Education Directory* Bible stories. The most effective teaching observed is characterised by very good teacher-pupil relationships, purposeful questioning, a strong pace to learning, and a clear focus on achieving high standards. Standards in pupils' books are in line with those in literacy, and presentation is good. However, an over-reliance on scheme templates and 'Golden Examples' can limit opportunities for pupils to express their deeper understanding. In some instances, extended PowerPoint-led sessions reduce engagement and have a detrimental impact on behaviour. Increasing opportunities for independence, together with more appropriately differentiated tasks, would enable pupils to express their knowledge more effectively and further develop as curious, motivated, and aspiring learners.

Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they communicate effectively to pupils. For example, pupils were able to confidently link the virtue of discernment and the Catholic social teaching principle of the common good to 'Dialogue and Encounter' through the example of St Francis and the Sultan. The school has recently introduced a new scheme, and

planning shows staff are beginning to personalise and adapt this; however, in some lessons observed, where the pace was slow and questioning limited, pupils were not challenged appropriately. Tracking and assessment systems are used widely in RE and, in some classes, pupils respond appropriately to teachers' comments. However, greater consistency is needed to ensure that marking and feedback help pupils understand how to improve their work and clearly identify next steps in learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive, and staff provide pupils with opportunities to present their learning in written form and through the use of information technology and art. Teachers show a strong commitment to the value of RE and its impact on pupils' moral and spiritual development. As a result, pupils develop a secure understanding of key religious concepts and values, which supports their growing awareness of their role in contributing positively to society.

The head teacher, deputy head teacher, and RE coordinator demonstrate a strong sense of vocation and a clear passion for the school and its community. Leaders and governors ensure that RE is given high priority and benefits from investment comparable to that of other core subjects, reflecting their sustained commitment. The RE programme meets all diocesan requirements, and leaders are working diligently to embed the *Religious Education Directory* through careful planning, engagement in training, and the implementation of policies aligned with diocesan expectations. Continuing professional development is a strength, with early career teachers and those new to Catholic education speaking highly of the support and training offered. Governors fulfil their role effectively as custodians of the school's Catholic identity, and their commitment to Catholic social teaching is evident in both policy and practice. Parent questionnaire responses were fully supportive of the school provision, and monitoring and evaluation processes are well established, with governors informed regularly and demonstrating an understanding of strengths and areas for development. While there is scope to further strengthen reflective evaluation and the sharing of best practice, leaders show a clear capacity and determination to build on these strong foundations, ensuring continued improvement in RE.

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

2

2

Nearly all pupils respond well to the numerous experiences of prayer and liturgy provided by the school. It is evident that, particularly in whole-school collective worship, these experiences are embedded in school life. All services begin with pupils saying, "Iesu golau ein byd"; pupils can reflect in silence, join in with traditional prayers, and sing with confidence. There is a very wide variety of liturgical experiences across the liturgical year, including a May procession, devotion to Our Lady and the Sacred Heart, Advent services, and Easter assemblies. This shapes an excellent understanding of the liturgical year for nearly all pupils. Most pupils work well with teachers to prepare *Gweddiwn* prayer services; however, there needs to be more variety and independence in these experiences of collective worship. Pupil involvement in purposeful evaluation of the services they have planned would enhance them further. Most pupils are confident in articulating how prayer and liturgy influence school life and wider experiences in relation to the Pupil Profile virtues and the principles of Catholic social teaching. For example, during the whole school collective worship, pupils gave a clear explanation linking discernment to the parable of The Prodigal Son.

Through a range of evidence, the carefully planned centrality of prayer and liturgy is apparent across the whole school; it is a feature of all RE lessons and gatherings of pupils, staff, and leaders. There is a wide range of prayers celebrating the tradition, including prayers and hymns in Welsh and Latin. Scripture is usually well chosen and reflects the liturgical season. Most staff are models of good practice. Musicians enhance whole school collective worship; however, most class prayer services lack creativity and are formulaic. Pupils need to be encouraged to confidently engage and participate in prayer services without over-direction

from staff. There are a few exceptions to this, where dance and high-quality singing were observed in the older classes. The school makes good use of space to enhance the prayer life of the school; pupils are very proud of the chapel and the grotto. There are dedicated prayer areas in each classroom, however, these are not consistently well kept or child-friendly. Leaders have thoughtfully planned how to work effectively with parents to ensure their involvement in the prayer life of the school; the prayer bags being a good example of this.

The school's policy for prayer and liturgy is well formulated, with all pupils using the *Gweddiwn* format. The development of the Prayer Toolkit across the school will help to ensure independence, variety, and creativity for all pupils. Leaders ensure that there is a planned school calendar of events that reflects the liturgical year, and pupils have regular opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist at school and in the parish. The school prioritises holy days and feasts such as the Feast of the Sacred Heart, which is celebrated with an assembly, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered during Lent and Advent. Professional development in collective worship, particularly the use of the prayer toolkit, is a priority on the school improvement plan this year. Further improvements need to be made to the class-based collective worship to ensure that there are high levels of pupil involvement and that they are creative, engaging, more spontaneous, and relevant to all pupils. Appropriate resources are afforded to collective worship and the subject leader has half a day per week assigned to work on RE priorities, including collective worship. Self-evaluation of collective worship must be firmly based on accurate first-hand evidence and must include pupils' viewpoints. Good practice in collective worship identified within the school should be better disseminated; this will ensure high-quality, interactive, and continuously improving collective worship.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	401082
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	6723322
Full postal address of the school	Llangewydd Raod, Bridgend, CF31 4JW
School phone number	01656 815560
Headteacher or Head of School	Rachel Azzopardi
Chair of Governors	David Bolton
School Website	www.stmaryscatholicprimary.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	3 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	25 October 2017
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The Inspection Team

Mary Mort

Lead

Louise Mills

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