



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF  
**ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON**  
EDUCATION SERVICE

## Denominational Catholic School Inspection Report

St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School

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School Unique Reference Number: 114565

Headteacher:	Mr Damien McKeever
Chair of Governors:	Mr Nigel Feast
Lead Inspector:	Mrs Elizabeth Hargreaves
Associate Inspector:	Mr Damian Fox
Inspection date:	16 <sup>th</sup> May 2022
	Previous Inspection: 1
Overall Effectiveness	This Inspection: 1
Catholic Life:	1
Religious Education:	1
Collective Worship:	1

## Summary of key findings for parents/carers and pupils/students

St Mary Magdalene's Catholic Primary is an Outstanding Catholic school because:

- Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and in each key stage.
- Pupils are excellent ambassadors for the school in the way they behave and confidently articulate the school's mission. They demonstrate that they understand the demands of living out their faith and embrace the opportunities to show kindness to others and a need to 'let their light shine'.

- Almost all pupils concentrate well in religious education lessons and are committed to improving their knowledge, understanding and skills in order to develop as competent learners.

- Teachers are confident in their subject expertise and employ a range of appropriate strategies, linked to other curriculum areas. As a result, pupils make good, or better progress.

- High quality resources are used very effectively, including other adults, to optimise learning for each pupil. Support given to pupils, especially by supporting adults, is sensitively managed in all classes.

- Prayer life is embedded in the heart of this school community and the prayers written by the pupils show great maturity and concern for wider world issues.

- Collective worship has a clear purpose, message and direction.

- Leaders are models of outstanding practice of collective worship. The themes chosen reflect a deep understanding of the liturgical season and the Church's mission in education.

- Pastoral care is outstanding.

# FULL REPORT

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School is situated in the Eastbourne and St. Leonard's Deanery of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton.

The school is maintained by East Sussex local authority. It serves the parish of Our Lady of the Rosary in Bexhill-on-Sea. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 83%. The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years old.

The number of pupils currently on roll is 207. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for Pupil Premium Grant is 9.6% and is below the national average.

1% of pupils have an Educational Health Care Plan. 11% of pupils have special educational needs. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, but the school has an increasing number of pupils from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

16% of pupils have English as an Additional Language which is below the national average.

The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10% in all key stages.

## WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Continue to raise standards in religious education by building on current good practice in order to achieve outstanding teaching and learning across the school.
- Further develop the role of pupils in preparing, leading and evaluating collective worship.

# CATHOLIC LIFE

## THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.
- The quality of provision of the Catholic life of the school.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school.

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### The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is: Outstanding

Almost all pupils enthusiastically embrace the demands that membership of the community entails. As a result, they take a leading role in those activities which promote the school's Catholic life and mission both within school and in the wider community. They are alert to the needs of others and seek justice for all within and beyond the school community as the support for numerous charities shows, especially their link school in Sierra Leone.

Outreach to the wider community is strong and links are encouraged, for example the pupils have written their own prayers, following a visit from the St Vincent de Paul Society, to be shared with the wider community. Key Stage 2 pupils also wrote prayers to people who receive food from a local food bank.

Pupils are happy, confident and secure in their own stage of spiritual and emotional growth. Almost all pupils deeply value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and its links with the parish community and the diocese. They feel safe in school because staff take care of them. This year St Mary Magdalene's pupils are taking a lead in the annual Good Shepherd celebration at Worth Abbey by reading the first reading and responding to the psalm through liturgical dance. Almost all pupils are confident in expressing pride in their own religious and cultural identity and beliefs.

### The quality of provision of the Catholic life of the school is: Outstanding

The school mission statement is at the heart of the school and is regularly reviewed. It is a clear and inspiring expression of the educational mission of the Church. All staff are fully committed to its implementation across the curriculum and the whole of school life. The learning environment reflects the school's mission and identity through concrete and effective signs of the school's Catholic character.

St Mary Magdalene's pupils are given many opportunities to make a positive contribution to the Catholic life of the school including Worship Leaders and a Spiritual Council. Pupils support whole school and class Masses, services such as Stations of the Cross, Harvest and Remembrance Day, in class Collective Worship and during religious education lessons. The pupils take pride in their responsibilities and are keen to offer new ideas and continually want to become more involved. One pupil said 'Jesus sacrificed Himself for us, so we can help others.'

The parish priest provides extensive and valued support/teaching for the Catholic life of the school. He celebrates a wide variety of Masses and liturgies, provides opportunities for Reconciliation during Advent and Lent and welcomes the school community to the parish church.

The school provides many opportunities for the moral and spiritual development of pupils and staff, for example, Year 6 pupils have an annual retreat in a local college as part of their transition to secondary school, and staff had a retreat this year which was attended by governors.

In part of the behaviour policy at St Mary Magdalene School it states that 'Children treat each other with kindness (Respectful), Children move around the school calmly (Safe), Children engage with their learning (Ready), Children respect their school environment (Respectful).' This policy reflects the observations on the day of inspection where all staff promoted high standards of behaviour and are exemplary role models of mutual respect and forgiveness by pupils. The curriculum reflects a commitment to Catholic social teaching, 'to care for our common home and the dignity of every human person' and the school has been awarded the Silver UNICEF Rights Respecting Award.

### **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school is: Outstanding**

The Headteacher and school leadership team are deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. The mission statement is displayed throughout the school and pupils are proud to have ownership of the child friendly version and to earn their 'Let your light shine' certificates.

The provision for the Catholic life of the school is given the highest priority by leaders in the school's self-evaluation cycle. The religious education action plan clearly identifies areas for development. This leads to well-targeted planned improvements, often creatively conceived with leaders and governors to further enhance the communal life and ethos of the school, for example, pupils developed their own stations of the cross to use in the school grounds and these were blessed in a special liturgy by the parish priest.

Governors make a significant contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They are passionate about the school's mission, are actively involved in its evaluation and ready to challenge and support where necessary. Governors are fully committed to their duties and

are involved in all aspects of school life including CPD training and attendance at liturgies and Masses. One parent supports the parish sacramental programme for Reconciliation and Holy Communion by regularly meeting those pupils in school.

St Mary Magdalene's actively supports the Bishop's vision for the diocese throughout the school. Parents and carers have a good grasp of the school's mission and are supportive of it. A grandparent added that her grandchild reminded her 'You have to think about the Gospel Values grandma.'

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

## THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in religious education.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education.

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### How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education is: Outstanding

The school follows the diocesan approved 'Come and See' programme, enriched by cross-curricular links. Most pupils from their varied starting points make good, or better progress in each key stage.

Most groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are also making progress comparable to the progress of other pupils.

Behaviour in lessons is exemplary because almost all pupils enjoy their religious education learning and are rarely off task. One pupil said he especially enjoyed being able to select how he could respond to the learning intention, by choosing from a variety of tasks planned by the teacher.

Pupils respond well to activities observed during the inspection. They show good concentration and have an understanding of how well they are doing and of what they need to do to improve. The quality of pupils' current work, both in class and in written work is very good and their religious education books are beautifully presented.

Pupils, including vulnerable pupils, respond well verbally to key questions to move their learning on in lessons and support staff record pupils' responses when appropriate. Displays and prayer tables make a positive addition to the learning environment and the pupils who are in the Spiritual Council monitor these areas to ensure they are of a high standard.

The school is successfully using the scheme 'Ten:Ten – Life to the Full' recommended by the diocese for the teaching of relationship education and to deliver RHSE.

### The quality of teaching and assessment in religious education is: Good

Teachers consistently plan good lessons linked to pupils' current assessment so that most pupils learn well. As a result of this, teaching is never less than good. Teachers are confident

in their subject expertise and have a good understanding of how pupils learn. As a consequence, most pupils apply themselves well and make good progress in lessons and over time.

Priority has been given to improving resources to allow a variety of creative teaching approaches to deliver learning based on the 'Come and See' programme. Individual learners' needs are addressed with a variety of teaching strategies including the effective use of ICT, role-play and art and the learning intention is shared at the start of lessons.

In some lessons observed on the day of inspection, skilled questioning by teachers moved the learning on and pupils were encouraged to make links to prior learning and reflect on how they might act differently as a result. Behaviour in all lessons was exemplary and most pupils apply themselves well and make good progress.

Achievement and effort are often celebrated, leading to good motivation from most pupils.

### **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education is: Outstanding**

Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and in each key stage.

Leaders and governors ensure that the required amount of curriculum time is given to religious education in each key stage and is comparable to other core curriculum subjects, in terms of professional development, staffing and resourcing.

The curriculum leader for religious education has a clear vision for teaching and learning and a good level of expertise in securing this vision. Leaders ensure continuing professional development for religious education is a priority for staff. The religious education leader regularly attends diocesan training and disseminates this to other staff during staff meetings.

Moderation of pupils' work in religious education in school is ongoing and moderation with other schools in the deanery was introduced last year. The focus for evaluation of work is assessment and moderation. A tracking system is in place for all pupils to monitor progress and attainment across the school, using formal and teacher assessment.

Leaders and governors ensure that religious education is imaginatively planned and creatively structured to build on and enhance prior learning. A part of a staff retreat was led by the diocesan adviser exploring creative links with religious education and other subject areas. This was clearly evidenced in lessons observed and pupils' work.

Any additional requirements of the Bishop regarding the RE curriculum are embraced and fully implemented.



## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP / PRAYER AND PRAYER LIFE

### THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AND PRAYER LIFE

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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship and prayer life.
- The quality of provision for collective worship and prayer life.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship and prayer life.

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#### How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship and prayer life is: Outstanding

There is a palpable enthusiasm for collective worship, reflected in the quality of communal singing, the quality of prayerful silence and the depth of participation in community prayers. Two acts of collective worship were observed as part of this inspection. These were collective worship in upper Key Stage 2 and a whole school assembly.

Pupils were engaged and thoughtful. They acted with respect and reverence. Key Stage 2 pupils played an active part in the whole school assembly, led by the Headteacher, with readings, prayers and a liturgical dance as a response to the Gospel which was read by the parish priest. Pupils were engaged with the challenge question about the number of times the word 'love' is mentioned in the Bible.

The experience of living and working in a praying community has had a profound and visible effect on the development of all pupils, irrespective of ability or faith background. Pupils, parents/carers and governors spoke about the school as a welcoming and inclusive community based on Gospel Values, where everyone is valued.

Pupils respond very positively to the school's collective worship and enjoy participating in it.

The school encourages pupils to develop their own responses to worship, offering a wide range of prayer and worship opportunities.

Pupils know that collective worship is a special time when they come together as a community and they appreciate this as an important part of school life.

#### The quality of provision for collective worship and prayer life is: Outstanding

Collective worship has a clear purpose, message and direction and is well resourced and planned. Praying together is part of the daily experience for all pupils and staff. Parents/carers

and grandparents feel valued and are invited to share many different prayer and worship opportunities as evidenced in parent questionnaires and interviews.

Governors strongly support the school through attendance at Masses, liturgies and assemblies.

The themes chosen for worship reflect a deep understanding of the liturgical season and the Church's mission in education. Staff demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the purpose of collective worship and the wide variety of forms it can take.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship and prayer life is: Outstanding**

Leaders and governors place the highest priority on the development of quality experiences of collective worship. Leaders also ensure that formation in the development of spiritual and liturgical understanding is a staff training priority, and this is supported by the parish priest.

Pupil voice plays a significant role in evaluating and improving the Catholic life of the school including liturgies, through regular surveys, questionnaires and spiritual council meetings. Using the diocesan monitoring forms, the religious education leader regularly evaluates collective worship. Feedback is used to further promote opportunities for stillness, prayer and reflections.

Leaders and governors place the highest priority on the development of quality experiences of collective worship in their reviews of school performance as evidenced in governor meeting minutes.

## Summary of Inspection Judgements

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

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### Catholic Life

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

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The quality of provision for the Catholic life of the school.

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

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### Religious Education

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.

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The quality of teaching and assessment in religious education.

2

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

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### Collective Worship and Prayer Life

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship and prayer life.

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The quality of provision for collective worship and prayer life.

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

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