

# **Diocese of Wrexham**

in North Wales



## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **St Mary's Catholic Primary School Newtown**

Head Teacher: Mrs. Barbara Legge

Chair of Governors: Mr M Flanagan

**Date of Inspection: November 2011**

**Date of previous Inspection: October 2005**

**Inspectors: Mrs K Ranson**

**Mrs. S Williams**

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Bishop of Wrexham and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005

## **BACKGROUND TO THE SECTION 50 INSPECTION.**

During the inspection, the inspectors follow the diocesan framework for inspection agreed by the Bishop of Wrexham and held by the Diocese of Wrexham. The inspection looks at the school as a Catholic school required to fulfill its statutory requirements under Section 50 of the School's Inspections Act, 2005 and the school's inspection requirements held under the authority of the Bishop of the Diocese, (Code of Canon Law, Book III: 806).

**During each inspection the inspectors focus on the overall performance of the school as a Catholic school by addressing three main questions:-**

**Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors provide an overall judgment on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

**The inspectors use a four-point scale and judgment.**

**What the judgment means**

Excellent

Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice

Good

Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement

Adequate

Strengths outweigh areas for improvement

Unsatisfactory

Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

## **Introduction**

The inspection of the school was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors. They visited the religious education lessons and held meetings with the Headteacher, the Chair of governors, representatives of the Governing Body, the Parish Priest and members of staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and provision, including prayer and collective worship. They looked at a range of evidence, including key documentation such as the school's self evaluation, the school's development plan and the pupils' work.

## **Context of the School**

St Mary's is a small primary school and is one of only two Catholic schools in Powys. It is situated in the parish of 'God the Holy Ghost' in Newtown and has strong links with the parish community. The school's mission statement is the phrase "Love one another as I have loved you", (John 13, 34-35). The school draws pupils from a variety of social backgrounds in the area. There are 110 pupils on roll, including nursery, with 36% of children who are baptised Catholic; 14% of children are eligible for free school meals and 16% of children are viewed by the school as having special learning needs. The school was inspected last in 2005.

## **Summary of the inspection findings.**

St Mary's School provides good Catholic education for its pupils. The school's mission statement and ethos are well embedded. The school's own sense of community and belonging are strong and this is evident in the positive behaviour and attitude of the pupils. Pupils are happy and engaged in their learning

As a Catholic school, the school's outcomes in religious education are good at Key Stage 2 and in the Foundation Phase the strengths outweigh the areas for improvement. The prospects for improvement across the school are judged to be good.

The provision for religious education is good and the school follows the programme 'Here I Am'. Standards reached in written work are good at Key stage 2 and at Foundation Phase; there are strengths that outweigh areas for improvement.

The school is well led by the head teacher, by committed governors and dedicated staff. This has successfully promoted and maintained the school's strong Catholic ethos and given direction to the school. Since the last inspection changes have been addressed in the roles of the senior management team. Provision for prayer and collective worship is good. It is planned and its development is given high priority.

Parents speak warmly and well of the school and recognise the care and encouragement their children receive. Children behave well and the standard of behaviour is good across the school

The school has rightly identified that the self evaluation process needs further development and that it needs to be more embedded in the school.

The school development plan is a purposeful and a manageable document which sets a clear direction for future school improvement. However, the school needs to establish rigorous systems to assess record and monitor success in religious education, in line with Diocesan requirements.

The school has the capacity to move forward at this time.

## **Recommendations**

In order to make progress, the school needs to:

- R1** Set up rigorous systems for assessing, recording, monitoring and evaluating religious education to ensure continuity and progression in line with diocesan requirements.
- R2** Develop further and embed the self evaluation process
- R3** Develop staff confidence and theological understanding in all the religious education curriculum in order to support staff, including non-Catholic staff and extend the pupils' knowledge.

## **What happens next?**

St Mary's School will create an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations from this inspection. Progress will be supported and monitored by the diocesan education service.

## **Key Question 1. How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils**

Pupils make good progress in their learning at Key Stage 2 and the strengths in the pupils' learning during the Foundation Phase outweigh the areas for improvement. Most groups of pupils make at least good progress in Key Stage 2. Pupils are keen to do well, enthusiastic about their learning and work at a good pace. They are reflective and inquiring. The quality of learning is good and pupils respond well to the wide range of opportunities provided by their teachers. They co-operate well in groups and pairs, helping each other when necessary and sharing their ideas. They also work well individually, as indicated by the extended writing of the older pupils.

The environment for learning is good and the teaching assistants have a positive impact on the classroom particularly in the way they assist pupils who have learning needs.

The Catholic ethos of the school is inclusive of everyone and there is good attention given to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. Pupils behave well towards one another and to the staff.

All the pupils worship together regularly through the school year both in church and in school. Collective worship is good and it is planned, recorded and evaluated by the staff. Focal points and display boards are evident in each classroom and central areas.

The pupils show interest in the religious life of others and show care and respect for religious objects in the school. Pupils enjoy singing, they are able to reflect in silence and join in community prayers. They are at ease when praying with their school community and appreciate what is taking place. The children plan and lead class worship

## **Key Question 2. The quality of the school's work in providing Catholic education**

Teaching is judged to be good overall at Key Stage 2 and it is satisfactory in the Foundation Phase. The teaching assistants are employed effectively across the school to assist in the classroom and to support the delivery of the curriculum.

Standards reached in religious education at the end of the Key Stage 2 overall, are good and they show good levels of progression for all pupils, including those pupils who have language or additional learning needs.

Staff have shown their commitment to their professional development and understanding by working to obtain the CCRS qualification. However, some staff need to develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of the faith to enable them to grow in confidence. This could be further developed, in the absence of the subject

leader, by the head teacher leading in strong good practice and through discussion of each topic in the Before You Begin preliminary session.

Assessment is undertaken in line with diocesan requirements. However, as identified by the school, the assessment recording and monitoring of religious education needs to be more rigorous and formal assessments need to be annotated. Tracking and recording systems in place do not yet meet the required guidelines. The judgements made by the school in respect of the standards reached by the children in religious education are therefore not sufficiently accurate. Marking does not always inform pupils about how to improve their work and a clearer consistent system of marking needs to be set in place across the school.

The school's provision for prayer and collective worship is planned and evaluated. The themes for prayer are relevant and consistent with the Catholic character of the school and also sensitive to the religious diversity of the pupils

The time allocation for religious education meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference and the curriculum fulfils the *Curriculum Directory for Religious Education* and diocesan requirements.

### **Key Question 3. How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school**

The governors and school leadership are committed to the educational mission of the church. Staff and pupils have high regard for the Catholic life of the school. Governors have established a 'mission & purpose committee'. There is also a committee to ensure school policies are up to date and reviewed regularly. The governors monitor religious education through their visits to school, by visiting lessons and by attending collective worship.

Since the last inspection, the school has made clear improvements. Collective worship is now planned and the pupils are involved in delivering collective acts of worship. This also needs to be evaluated and monitored

The governing body is aware of the school's self evaluation document and has recognised that the self evaluation process needs to more developed. The school's development plan is a purposeful and manageable document which sets a clear direction for future school improvement. However the school needs to include in this, rigorous systems to assess, record and monitor success in religious education.

A good relationship exists with the parish as a community and with the priest. The parish priest confirmed the strong ethos of St. Mary's and the spirituality of the pupils. He has expressed his willingness to support the school in his role as governor for religious education and in the delivery of the programme.

Money is raised in support of CAFOD and a wide range of local and global charities. Pupils have a sense of the wider world, other people's beliefs and needs.

## **Partnership and School Community**

St Mary's is a welcoming and inclusive school and its strong Catholic ethos ensures that every pupil is valued and fully integrated into the school community. The values of the Gospel are emphasised and reflected in the school's calm environment. This aims to support and value all the children so that they can enjoy their learning and achieve their full potential.

Parents speak well of the school and recognise the care and encouragement their children receive. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and know what to do if they are worried about anything. They learn to be confident and know that the staff care for them.