



St Mark's RC Primary

Bardon Close, Westerhope, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE5 4BT

School Unique Reference Number: **3913474**

Inspection dates: 16 – 17 January 2020

Lead inspector: John Hattam

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| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | This inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
| Catholic Life: | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Religious Education: | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Collective Worship: | | Outstanding | 1 |

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Mark's RC Primary is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- The mission statement underpins all areas of school life at St Mark's. Each member of this community is recognised as being a unique individual and 'precious to God'.
- The quality of Religious Education is outstanding. High quality teaching ensures that pupils make outstanding progress in their knowledge and skills in Religious Education. As a result, pupils leave St Mark's as religiously literate young people.
- The quality of Collective Worship at St Mark's is outstanding. Opportunities for prayer are woven into the fabric of the school. Pupils, staff and parents are uplifted by their engagement with worship.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Mark's is a one form entry primary school located on the western edge of Newcastle upon Tyne.
- There are currently 219 pupils on roll including 19 nursery pupils.
- 36% of the pupils on roll are baptised Catholics which is significantly lower than the diocesan average.
- 20% of pupils have English as an additional language which is above the national figure of 16%.
- 32% of pupils receive free school meals which is well above the national figure.
- 13% of pupils have an identified special educational need or disability, which is slightly below the national figure.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- To improve the quality of Collective Worship by:
 - developing a greater range of opportunities for parents and other adults to be more deeply involved in the prayer life of the school.
- To improve the quality of Religious Education by:
 - designing creative learning sequences across all key stages that encourage pupils to think more spiritually, ethically and theologically.

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 for the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers 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.

- At St Mark's the mission statement is central to all areas of school life. All pupils spoken to during the inspection know that they are loved and that they are precious to God.
- Pupils take every opportunity to live out their mission with action. They are proud to be Mini Vinnies, faith leaders and school councillors, using these positions to shape and plan for improvements in the Catholic Life of the school.
- Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities that the school offers to be involved in supporting and contributing to a wide range of charities including; Macmillan Cancer Care, local foodbanks, CAFOD, the Shoebox Appeal and the 5p Bus. Pupils talked with great pride about being able to support local charities in particular, recognising that they are able to make a real difference to the lives of others in their local community.
- Pupils say that they feel like St Mark's is a special family and that they enjoy being part of that family. One child said that St Mark's is a special place because, 'We know how to look after each other in our school and we always try to make sure that everyone is happy.'
- Pupils described how the school supports them to be the best they can be and how it teaches them about values for life. Pupils across school referenced the work of the Values Curriculum and were able to talk about how the values that are explored in work at school help them to make sense of their place in the world.
- The Catholic tradition of the school and its links with the parish and the diocese are deeply valued and respected by pupils. With the support and encouragement of the parish priest and key members of the parish community, pupils are regularly involved with parish celebrations and activities.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The provision for the Catholic Life of the school is given the highest priority. This is reflected in the school mission statement. Parents and staff are able to articulate how the mission statement is lived out at St Mark's and their role in this.
- Catholic Life at St Mark's is outstanding because there are tight bonds that have been built over a period of time. These are most obvious in the quality of relationships that exist between pupils, staff and parents.

- Great care is taken to ensure that the school is a prayerful and joyful community that reflects the school's mission and its Catholic character. Both experienced staff and those who have joined more recently participate enthusiastically in the Catholic Life of the school including staff prayer, communal singing, retreats and continuing professional development.
- Pastoral support provided to pupils and staff is outstanding. When support is provided to pupils, staff or parents it is never done so in isolation, instead it is seen as everyone's responsibility. Staff regularly check on the welfare of pupils outside the year group they are assigned to; as a result parents appreciate the continuity of care for all pupils at St Mark's. Staff value the support they receive from senior leaders.
- Behaviour around school is exemplary because the school communicates clear and consistent expectations to all pupils. Parents know that the school will deal with incidents in a timely and just manner. Pupils understand the importance of listening to others and the need for forgiveness and reconciliation.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The school's leadership team have the ability and skills to promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are committed to the mission of the Catholic Church in education. They are passionate about making the Catholic Life of the school at St Mark's the very best it can be.
- Contributions from all staff are valued by leaders at St Mark's. Leaders including the governing body have very high expectations for the promotion and continuing development of the Catholic Life of the school.
- Leaders including the headteacher, deputy and governors are proud to be associated with St Mark's, they cherish the development and sustenance of an authentic Catholic ethos.
- Over time leaders have made efforts to engage parents and carers more in the Catholic life of the school. Whilst there have been some notable successes, eg. the Spirituality Week linked to the art curriculum leaders and governors recognise that this remains an area for improvement.
- The school's rigorous self-evaluation is an accurate reflection of planned monitoring, analysis and self-challenge. Governors appreciate the timely information provided by the head and Religious Education coordinator which helps to inform them so that they are well-placed to challenge and support where appropriate.
- The school uses social media well to inform and engage parents. As a result of this, parents feel that they are part of the mission to improve and transform the school to make it the best it can be.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers 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.

- Early assessment shows that pupils typically enter St Mark's with levels of religious knowledge and skills well below that of many diocesan schools. Despite this, almost all pupils make good progress by the end of key phases with many achieving outstanding progress.
- Pupils enjoy and understand the value of Religious Education, demonstrating commitment to their learning. Behaviour observed during the inspection in lessons was exemplary, with the vast majority of pupils concentrating well and displaying positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Pupils are keen to do well and worked well in lessons observed during the inspection. They said that they know how to improve their work because of the help that teachers give them and the targets that are in their books.
- Pupils described their favourite lessons as the ones where they were encouraged to use their creativity to explore their own faith and the faith of others. As pupils progress through key stages 1 and 2 they develop and apply a range of skills well, including independence, imagination and the ability to interpret sources and symbols.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported at St Mark's by expert staff where they achieve well and enjoy Religious Education alongside their class peers.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.

- As a result of being a pilot school for recent changes to assessment the teachers at St Mark's are well placed to drive forward improvements in teaching and learning in Religious Education.
- Top quality continuing professional development means that teachers are very effective in planning high quality lessons linked to pupils' current assessment and their knowledge of the individual. Teachers are very skilled at consolidating and extending pupils knowledge and understanding so that they learn extremely well.
- Excellent subject knowledge in Religious Education means that teachers have a high level of confidence and are able to adapt quickly to the needs of learners. As a result, almost all pupils make rapid and sustained progress.
- In lessons observed during the inspection, teachers used collaborative working really well to motivate pupils and sustain high levels of concentration.

- Careful observation and skilful questioning help to maximise learning opportunities for all pupils.
- Teachers are passionate about Religious Education and want their pupils to succeed. They have high expectations for behaviour in class and the achievement of all pupils. Timely feedback to pupils helps them to make rapid progress across the curriculum.
- Teachers use effective tracking systems to ensure that pupils are on course to meet and exceed end of phase expectations.
- Leaders have identified that more needs to be done to provide opportunities for pupils to think ethically and theologically across the Religious Education curriculum. It is envisaged that the creative arts will be a suitable vehicle for this future development.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding.

- Leaders and governors at St Mark's ensure that the Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and in each key stage.
- Leaders have placed Religious Education at the core of the curriculum offered at St Mark's. They use the school website to educate and inform. Parents said that the first contact for many of them is the school website which effectively promotes the many strengths of the Religious Education curriculum. Parents stated, 'It signposts us to key information and events.'
- The headteacher and Religious Education coordinator work well together to monitor and evaluate the quality of Religious Education at St Mark's. They have a very good knowledge of the many strengths and the areas for development. As a result of this careful monitoring and searching self-challenge, leaders are able to draw up well targeted strategic plans which lead to outstanding outcomes in Religious Education.
- The leadership team works well with cluster neighbours and partner schools who are able to challenge the quality of Religious Education judgements made by the school as well as supporting where necessary. This collegiate approach is a real strength at St Mark's.
- The curriculum leader for Religious Education and the headteacher share an outstanding vision for Religious Education at St Mark's. They are both models of outstanding practice and are key to the improvements in Religious Education that have taken place since the last inspection.
- Governors are a key part of the cycle of improvement in Religious Education at St Mark's since the last inspection. They are highly skilled, they know how to challenge effectively and when to support leaders in school.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Since the last inspection the opportunities for pupils to become more actively engaged in acts of Collective Worship have increased. As a consequence of this, pupils now describe acts of worship as inspiring and moving. Pupils also said that, 'When we pray together we are filled with calm.' Younger pupils said that acts of worship made them feel good if things had been bad with their friends. During the inspection, pupils described prayer and worship at St Mark's in the same way as the talked about their friends, their teachers and other curriculum areas. For them it feels like it is woven into the fabric of the school.
- A number of different forms of worship and prayer were observed during the inspection from whole school worship to meditation. During all of these acts of worship and prayer pupils gathered with reverence, listened intently and offered heartfelt response.
- Since the last inspection, pupils are now more creative and resourceful in their planning of Collective Worship and demonstrate confidence in a variety of approaches to prayer. From the earliest points in their school career pupils are keen to lead Collective Worship. They described how happy it made them, especially leading their friends in prayer in class. Older pupils are very proud when their parents are able to join them when they lead whole school worship.
- Pupils at St Mark's are proud to be part of the faith community. They enjoy the many opportunities to worship with the parish community at St Mark's Church, equally they enjoy opening up their school so that members of the parish can join them in acts of worship which they lead.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Leaders of Collective Worship across school take great care to provide opportunities for staff and pupils to be interested and inspired. Acts of worship punctuate the day and are central to any special celebration or gathering at St Mark's.
- Worship at St Mark's is frequent, relevant and inclusive. Staff across school are careful to choose themes which reflect a deep understanding of the liturgical seasons and the Church's mission in education.
- Collective Worship is given the highest priority at St Mark's, relevant staff make sure it is

skilfully planned and resourced and follows the yearly pattern of the Gospels so that pupils are able to deepen their understanding and build on previous experiences.

- Leaders design opportunities for parents and other adults associated with St Mark's to be involved in the prayer life of the school. The recent commissioning of the Prayer Room is an excellent example of this. However, leaders are aware that more needs to be done to engage parents who are traditionally harder to reach and they see this as a key development for the future provision of Collective Worship at St Mark's.
- All adults at St Mark's, including highly skilled teaching support staff, are passionate about high quality worship and take every opportunity to model acts of worship for pupils. Themes for worship are chosen sensitively, often reflecting the school's commitment to improving the mental health of pupils and their understanding of their part in God's creation. Staff are skilled in helping pupils to develop an awareness of contemporary issues and discuss them in relation to the Gospel.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- The headteacher sets the highest of standards when leading Collective Worship. Her inspirational leadership helps pupils and staff develop a deeper appreciation of the Church's traditions, seasons, rites and symbols.
- The headteacher's and Religious Education coordinator's passionate promotion of Collective Worship ensures that liturgical and spiritual development are priorities in school and that an appropriate amount of time is devoted to them.
- The Religious Education coordinator is an experienced leader. She is a model of outstanding practice for both staff and pupils; she works closely with the headteacher, colleagues across school and in the wider diocesan family to provide the very best opportunities for Collective Worship.
- Senior leaders across school are involved in the formal and informal monitoring and evaluation of Collective Worship. As a result of this collegiate approach, senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in Collective Worship.
- Staff who are new to a year group or recent additions to the team at St Mark's receive excellent support and guidance from leaders. The quality of professional development on offer at St Mark's is a real strength of the school
- The governors actively seek to promote Collective Worship. They are a visible presence at many acts of Collective Worship and as a consequence they are able to speak with great authority about the significance of purposeful Collective Worship and its importance in sustaining a prayerful community. Governors are very clear about the strengths and areas for development in Collective Worship.
- Leaders including governors strive for continuous improvement towards excellence. They regularly seek the views of pupils, staff and parents regarding the quality of Collective Worship in school and are quick to respond to these findings in a systematic and thorough way.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

HOW EFFECTIVE THE SCHOOL IS IN PROVIDING CATHOLIC EDUCATION:**1****CATHOLIC LIFE:****1**

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 managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**1**

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

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The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

1

How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**1**

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

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How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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SCHOOL DETAILS

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| School name | St Mark's RC Primary |
| Unique reference number | 3913474 |
| Local authority | Newcastle |
| This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt Reverend Robert Byrne CO the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle under canon 806 of Canon Law. For voluntary aided schools it also fulfils the responsibility the governing body has to inspect the school under s48 of the Education Act 2005. | |
| Chair of governors | Mrs Monica Lowes |
| Headteacher | Mrs Alison Miller |
| Date of previous school inspection | February 2015 |
| Telephone number | 0191 2869349 |
| Email address | office@stmarksrcprimary.co.uk |