CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INSPECTION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND ACADEMIES

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Fleetwood

URN: 151272

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Lancaster

19–20 March 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

1

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

1

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

1

Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	Yes
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	Yes
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Compliance statement

- 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 laid down by the Bishop of Lancaster.
- The school has responded fully to the areas for improvement from the previous Catholic school inspection.

What the school does well

- There is a strong family ethos, rooted in faith, where all members of the community feel valued, supported, and cared for.
- A deeply embedded Catholic ethos at the heart of the school, with Christ central to all aspects of school life.
- There are rich opportunities for faith development within a joyful, welcoming, and fully inclusive environment where Catholic values are fully lived.
- The pupils feel loved, valued, and have a strong sense of belonging; staff and parents are well supported, with strong links to the parish and families.
- St Mary's benefits from the inspirational and driven leadership at all levels, including a knowledgeable and passionate religious education leader and senior leaders who are committed to embedding the *Religious Education* and *Prayer and Liturgy Directories*.

What the school needs to improve

- To develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the *Religious Education Directory* for all staff across the school, building on the high-quality delivery that deepens pupils' knowledge, understanding and lived experience of the Catholic faith.
- To embed and further develop pupils' active involvement in the prayer life of the school, building opportunities for pupils to confidently plan, lead and participate in a range of meaningful prayer and liturgical experiences.
- To strengthen governors' understanding of the key aspects of school performance, including religious education and Catholic life, enabling them to confidently question, challenge, and support leaders in their mission at St Mary's.

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

1

Pupil outcomes

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

1

Provision

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

1

Leadership

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

1

St Mary's is a vibrant and nurturing school community where pupils lived experience clearly reflects the staff's deep commitment to developing pupils who understand that they are loved by God. Strong, authentic relationships underpin the life of the school, with staff acting as positive role models who embody the school's mission in their daily interactions. The mission statement is well known to all members of the community and deeply understood, informing how pupils and staff work together as a faith-filled family.

Pupils demonstrate a profound sense of respect for one another, and behaviour throughout the school is exemplary. They show a strong commitment to serving others, recognising this as central to Jesus' message. Pupils articulate a clear understanding of their responsibility to care for the common home and to promote the common good, actively seeking opportunities to support those in need. The children's leadership team spoke about 'respecting God's creation with everything we do'. Staff carefully guide and support pupils in living out this mission, ensuring that the Church's values are meaningfully embedded in both the life of the school and the wider community.

The school is deeply committed to its parish community, working collaboratively with the parish priest to actively create meaningful opportunities for pupils and families to live out the Catholic traditions of the Church. Staff and pupils recognise the central importance of strong, supportive relationships, fostering a joyful and inclusive community with Christ at its heart. This is recognised by parents, with one saying, 'Everyone at St Mary's school has been such good role models in our daughter's religious beliefs and has allowed her to blossom.'

There is a strong sense that everyone is welcome at St Mary's, a view consistently recognised and affirmed by both pupils and parents. This inclusive ethos reflects the exceptional pastoral care provided by all staff, ensuring that each individual is known, valued and supported.

Effective use of resources strongly supports the delivery of high-quality Human Relationships and Sex Education (HRSE) within the school. Pupils show genuine respect for people of different faiths and backgrounds and are attentive and thoughtful during discussions. They listen carefully to others' views and respond with kindness and sensitivity. This reflects the school's commitment to fostering a culture of dignity and inclusion, where all are valued, which they recognise as part of being a 'happy and caring school'. Pupils leave lessons equipped with the knowledge, understanding and confidence to make informed choices, demonstrating behaviour that is respectful, compassionate and rooted in the school's mission.

Leaders and governors demonstrate a deep commitment to their role as guardians of the school's Catholic life and mission. Their passion and clarity of vision are significant strengths, ensuring that the school's mission is lived out authentically. This strong sense of purpose is shared by the whole community and is evident in the quality of relationships, provision and outcomes. Leaders need to continue to support governors in their roles so that they can all effectively understand, question, and challenge aspects of religious education and Catholic life.

The school benefits from strong and mutually enriching links with the parish. These partnerships are integral to the Catholic life of the school and provide meaningful opportunities for shared worship and spiritual growth. For example, devotional practices such as the Stations of the Cross, held in the school hall during Lent, are well attended by parishioners and parents, reflecting the school's central role within the wider faith community.

Catholic Social Teaching is thoughtfully and consistently woven throughout the curriculum and the school's prayer life. As a result, pupils develop a strong understanding of their responsibilities towards others and are encouraged to act with justice, compassion and respect.

Leaders are ambitious for all members of the school community. They are committed to providing high-quality training and effective pastoral care, ensuring that staff are well supported in their roles. Through their example and encouragement, leaders inspire pupils, staff and families to actively participate in and contribute to the school's mission.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

1

Provision

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

1

Leadership

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

1

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, achieve exceptionally well in religious education. They make sustained progress over time, clearly demonstrating that they know more, remember more, and can do more. Pupils are religiously literate, highly engaged, and reflect deeply, thinking ethically and theologically with maturity. They confidently articulate their understanding using precise subject-specific vocabulary and pose insightful questions.

In lessons, pupils engage thoughtfully with complex theological concepts. For example, when exploring the *Last Four Things*, they offered mature, reflective responses in a secure, supportive environment. When studying the Parable of the Lost Sheep, pupils made meaningful links to sin, describing it as turning away from God or choosing the wrong path. They also connected learning about the Last Supper to Passover and the Exodus, demonstrating strong retention and the ability to make links across topics.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary. They are attentive, reflective, and fully committed, approaching religious education with enthusiasm and reverence. They take pride in their work and value the time dedicated to the subject, recognising how it deepens their understanding. As a result, pupils enjoy religious education, are highly motivated, and consistently strive to achieve their best.

Teaching in religious education is consistently effective and enables pupils to make progress. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge, high expectations, and a strong commitment to religious education as the "core of the core." Lessons are carefully planned and sequenced to build on prior learning. Skilled questioning deepens pupils' thinking, while clear explanations and modelling support the development of secure knowledge and skills. As a result, pupils

confidently articulate their ideas and engage in increasingly sophisticated theological reflection.

Assessment is used effectively to inform teaching and ensure all pupils are appropriately supported and challenged. Feedback is purposeful and helps pupils understand how to improve, contributing to strong progress over time. Support staff are deployed effectively and make a valuable contribution to learning. Teachers provide a wide range of engaging and meaningful activities, which pupils approach with enthusiasm. Pupils value the support they receive and can clearly explain how teaching helps them to make progress. All staff will gain confidence as they continue to use and embed the requirements of *Religious Education Directory.*

Staff are committed to ongoing professional development. High-quality professional development, including work towards the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies, strengthens subject knowledge and confidence. Teachers feel well supported by leaders, fostering a strong culture of collaboration and continuous improvement. As a result, teaching is strong, pupils are fully engaged, and outcomes in religious education are outstanding.

Leadership of religious education is highly effective and has a significant impact on provision and pupil outcomes. Leaders share a clear and ambitious vision, ensuring religious education is prioritised within the curriculum.

The subject leader provides inspirational and dynamic leadership, demonstrating strong subject expertise and a deep commitment to continuous improvement. She effectively supports and develops colleagues; staff value her guidance and feel confident seeking advice, contributing to a culture of collaboration and professional growth.

Monitoring and evaluation are rigorous and sharply focused on improving outcomes. This includes robust internal processes and active engagement in cluster and diocesan moderation to ensure accuracy, consistency, and alignment with best practice.

Leaders ensure the curriculum is implemented in line with the *Religious Education Directory*. Pupils are well supported, enabling them to access learning at an appropriate level and demonstrate their understanding effectively. Professional development is prioritised and impactful, strengthening staff confidence and subject knowledge across the team, which will grow over time.

As a result, pupils achieve exceptionally well, staff feel well supported, and the quality of religious education is outstanding.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

1

Pupil outcomes

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

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

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

1

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school and are experienced by all pupils as joyful, inclusive and deeply faith filled. A thoughtfully created environment enriches opportunities for prayer and reflection, enabling pupils to engage meaningfully and deepen their relationship with God. Pupils speak confidently about the impact of prayer and liturgy, recognise its importance in their daily lives, and know, 'We bow our heads, so we are being respectful to God.'

Pupils fully engage in the school's prayer life and understand its significance in living out the mission statement, *'working together for the good of each other'*. They benefit from a rich variety of prayer experiences, carefully planned by staff, that provide regular opportunities for quiet, calm, and reflective prayer throughout the school day and mark the liturgical year. Pupils value praying together, consistently demonstrate exemplary behaviour, show a deep understanding of reverence and respect, and participate confidently. The work of Mini Vinnies is developing to enhance opportunities for pupils to become actively involved in planning and delivering prayer and liturgy time across year groups.

Pupils speak openly and confidently about the centrality of prayer at St Mary's, recognising the well-established daily pattern that reflects the traditions and liturgical seasons of the Catholic Church. They experience a rich and creative variety of prayer opportunities, including within the classroom, the peace garden and the local environment, which deepen their spiritual development. Scripture is carefully selected by staff to support both the curriculum and the liturgical year, enabling pupils to make meaningful connections in their learning and faith life.

Opportunities for communal prayer and liturgy are highly valued, with parishioners and families joining the school community for liturgies such as the Stations of the Cross. Pupils

actively seek ways to serve others and contribute to the school community, living out their faith in action. The nurturing ethos of St Mary's enables pupils to confidently use and develop their gifts, whether through singing, artwork or serving as ministers of the Word.

Prayer spaces within classrooms are thoughtfully maintained and reflect the liturgical year, supporting pupils in their daily prayer life. Pupils speak with pride about the *Peaceful Prayer* area, demonstrating a strong sense of ownership and responsibility in maintaining it. Their exemplary attitudes reflect a deep respect for prayer and an understanding of its importance in their lives.

Leaders have carefully planned a progressive approach to prayer and liturgy that reflects both pupils' experiences and staff's expertise. A clear, well-sequenced strategy is in place from Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6, enabling pupils to develop greater confidence and independence. By Year 6, pupils competently plan and lead prayer and liturgy for their class communities, demonstrating ownership and maturity in their leadership.

This strategic approach is effective and continues to evolve, ensuring that all pupils are given meaningful opportunities to take an active role in the school's prayer life. Whole-school prayer and liturgy is a strength, characterised by pupils' confident participation, particularly in their joyful and reverent responses and singing, making each celebration a rich and uplifting experience.

Strong links with the parish further enrich this provision. The parish priest is a valued, regular presence in school, and pupils speak enthusiastically about their participation in Mass, both at church and during school celebrations. Inspectors noted exemplary prayer and liturgy, including the Stations of the Cross and a Ministers of the Word service, demonstrating prayer's central role in school life. Senior leaders nurture this with deliberation and sustain it, ensuring that the provision remains pertinent, engaging, and consistently excellent.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	151272
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8883709
Full postal address of the school	London Street, Fleetwood, FY7 6EU
School phone number	01253 878445
Headteacher	Ann Kowalska
Chair of Governors	Karen Higham
School Website	http://www.st-marys-fleetwood.lancs.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	March 2020
Previous denominational inspection grade	1 - Outstanding

The inspection team

Anne Charnley	Lead
Michelle MacLeod	Team

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