CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

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

St Marys Roman Catholic Primary School

URN: 119663

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Salford

07 October 2026 – 08 October 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness — 1

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.3) — 1

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) — 1

The quality of curriculum religious education

Collective worship (p.7) — 1

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	Yes
The school is fully compliant with diocesan directives	Yes
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

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This Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection was carried out under canons 804 & 806 of the code of canon law. For maintained schools and academies in England it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.48 of the Education Act 2005. For maintained schools and academies in Wales it fulfils the statutory requirements of s.50 of the Education Act 2005.

What the school does well

- The school's Catholic mission is known, lived, and witnessed to throughout its joyful, caring, and exceptionally supportive community.
- Staff provide outstanding pastoral care for pupils and families, demonstrating a particular commitment to those who are most vulnerable.
- Highly effective adaptive teaching enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to participate fully in religious education and achieve well.
- Pupils participate fully, actively, and consciously in prayer and liturgy, demonstrating deep reverence, engagement, and respect.
- Senior leaders and governors generously place their skills and expertise at the service of other schools across the diocese and local authority.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen pupils' understanding of Catholic social teaching so that they can explain more clearly the theological foundations underpinning their actions.
- Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of celebrations of the word so that findings inform improvements in their quality and impact on pupils' spiritual development.

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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

1

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

Provision

1

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

Leadership

1

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

Pupils at St Mary's RC Primary School know that their school is a special place where everyone is welcomed, valued, and loved. They are extremely happy and confident. Pupils are polite and courteous and take pride in celebrating one another's achievements. Their behaviour in lessons and around school is exemplary. Pupils understand that their mission is to follow Jesus; as one child explained, 'We have to love our neighbour as ourselves.' They eagerly embrace roles and responsibilities through the Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) team, Laudato Si' team, Caritas, and other leadership groups. Pupils actively respond to local and national needs, supporting organisations including Bury Hospice, Caritas, and Cafod. They confidently initiate their own charitable activities, including fundraising for the Little Princess Trust and using their pocket money to make Easter treat bags. Pupils recognise their personal responsibility to care for our common home. These opportunities give pupils practical ways to express their commitment to others and contribute to the life of the school. The combination of pupil leadership, charitable activity, and care for the environment reflects a community in which service is valued and pupils are encouraged to put their faith into daily action. They connect their service to others with Jesus' teaching about loving their neighbour, although their understanding of the specific principles of Catholic social teaching underpinning these actions is less developed. Pupils value the contribution of the GIFT team, whose lunchtime services are well attended.

The school's mission statement, 'Our school, our family, modelled on Christ', is deeply rooted in the life of this welcoming and nurturing community. Recently updated, it is known, lived, and witnessed to throughout the school. Strong relationships between staff and families

create a close and supportive community. The school's commitment to pupils' personal, spiritual, and emotional development is evident in the thoughtful care provided, particularly for those who are vulnerable or have additional needs. Parents and carers are highly complimentary about the school, with a high response rate and overwhelmingly positive feedback in the inspection survey. One parent commented, 'St Mary's is a wonderful community where faith is lived out authentically…' Pupils benefit from a wide range of extracurricular and enrichment activities. The school's '25 Butterfly Bucket List' experiences provide life-enhancing opportunities throughout their time at St Mary's and contribute to their wider development. Staff provide high levels of pastoral care. Provision for relationships, sex, and health education meets diocesan requirements and is supported by the *Ten:Ten Life to the Full* programme.

Leaders and governors are dedicated to the school's Catholic mission and determined that it should benefit every pupil. They ensure that Christ is at the heart of school life. Leaders and governors systematically evaluate the school's Catholic life and mission, drawing on the views of pupils, staff, and parents to identify priorities and secure improvements. They engage with diocesan training and generously place their expertise at the service of other Catholic schools. Through the school's work as Lancashire Research School, leaders demonstrate their commitment to service and the common good. Staff value the guidance and encouragement they receive and share a strong commitment to the school's Catholic character and pupils' care and faith development. Leaders work closely with parents, carers, and outreach agencies, targeting resources to support families in greatest need. Leaders and governors seek to strengthen the school's partnership with the local parish and contribute to parish ministries. The two early career teachers spoke passionately about the school and the support they have received. The weekly newsletter shares and explains the following Sunday's Gospel, helping families engage with Scripture and strengthening the relationship between faith, school, and home.

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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 at St Mary's RC Primary School are developing excellent knowledge, understanding, and skills in religious education. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress and achieve highly. Attainment data over three years show that pupils achieve above-average standards compared with other core curriculum subjects. Behaviour in religious education lessons is outstanding. Across all year groups, pupils sustain their concentration and confidently respond to teachers' questions. They recall prior learning and use extended sentences and subject-specific vocabulary to explain their understanding. Their readiness to contribute shows the confidence they have developed in discussing religious ideas. Pupils listen respectfully to the contributions of others, creating opportunities to learn together. Their use of religious vocabulary helps them communicate their learning and explain the meaning of what they have studied. Pupils demonstrate care and respect for one another and work well both collaboratively and independently. They enjoy religious education, particularly visits that enrich their learning. Pupils explained how a visit to a mosque deepened their understanding of another faith. Survey responses confirm that the majority of pupils enjoy the subject. More opportunities for pupils to ask questions of teachers and peers would help them deepen their knowledge and understanding.

Teachers demonstrate confident subject knowledge and a deep commitment to religious education and pupils' spiritual and moral development. Collaborative planning, professional dialogue, and continuing professional development support their practice. Staff create a positive climate for learning in which pupils are encouraged to support one another. Skilful

teaching and questioning enable pupils to demonstrate their understanding, acquire increasingly sophisticated vocabulary, and apply it to their learning. The consistent emphasis on key vocabulary and the variety of teaching strategies are strengths. In a Year 4 lesson exploring the Prayer of St Francis of Assisi, pupils confidently explained sophisticated vocabulary and demonstrated secure understanding through engaging activities. Teachers ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included and supported in lessons. Teachers' shared approach gives pupils a consistent experience as they move through the school. The emphasis on participation ensures that pupils with different learning needs can contribute alongside their peers. Teachers use assessment information to understand what pupils already know and identify what needs further teaching. Assessment takes place through the review of prior learning, during activities, and at the end of each branch of learning. Developing assessment and tracking systems across both key stages support teachers' understanding of individual pupils' attainment.

The school has introduced the diocesan-recommended religious education programme, *Lighting the Path*, which reflects the learning required by the *Religious Education Directory*. To prepare staff for its introduction, the subject leader developed an interim curriculum alongside a programme of professional development. This secured teachers' understanding of the directory and enabled them to teach the curriculum with enthusiasm and purpose. The preparation for curriculum change reflects leaders' commitment to supporting staff through professional development. The subject leader and senior leaders have a clear vision for religious education and a high level of expertise in how pupils learn. Their leadership secures consistent teaching across the school and contributes to excellent outcomes. Leaders regularly monitor teaching and scrutinise pupils' work. Governors participate in termly religious education book study sessions, during which pupils share their work and explain their learning. These sessions enable the link governor to evaluate pupils' knowledge and understanding. Opportunities to discuss pupils' work bring governors into direct contact with their learning. Together, these activities provide information about the curriculum and its implementation. The subject leader also provides governors with a termly report on Catholic life and mission and religious education, supporting their oversight of provision.

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Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

1

Pupil outcomes

2

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

Provision

1

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

1

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

Pupils at St Mary's participate fully in the prayer and liturgy provided by the school. They come together regularly throughout the year, contributing joyful singing and prayerful silence. Their engagement demonstrates reverence and respect. Pupils describe aspects of the Church's liturgical year and recognise the prayers and celebrations associated with particular seasons, including Advent. They know some traditional prayers and recite the school prayer with enthusiasm. Their knowledge of the wider breadth of Catholic prayer traditions, including those in the school's prayer book, requires further development, alongside their understanding of how prayer can support daily life. Pupils collaborate well when preparing class celebrations of the word. Floor books record the variety of celebrations experienced and pupils' evaluations. Members of the Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) team confidently discuss their responsibilities and demonstrate skill in collaboration and evaluation. They particularly value working with younger pupils through Godly Play. Further opportunities to share their expertise with younger classes would develop their contribution to preparing and leading celebrations of the word across the school. The team's work offers a valuable opportunity for pupils to contribute to the prayer life of the community. Extending this involvement would allow younger pupils to benefit more widely from the confidence and skills members have developed.

Prayer and liturgy are central to school life. An established daily pattern of prayer provides regular opportunities for the community to gather and reflect. Staff model exemplary practice for pupils and one another. A range of experiences rooted in Catholic tradition supports the spiritual development of the school community. These include the daily Rosary challenge in

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October, Stations of the Cross during Lent, and Stay and Pray sessions, which parents particularly appreciate. Well-chosen Scripture passages enhance celebrations of the word and provide a focus for prayer and reflection. Staff responsible for this provision demonstrate considerable skill and place strong emphasis on pupils' spiritual formation. They help pupils understand their relationship with God and consider how God calls them to live. This is evident among older pupils, who understand their responsibilities as servant leaders. Year 6 pupils are keen to share their developing skills with others across the school. Families and other members of the community are welcomed and encouraged to participate in celebrations in school and church. These opportunities bring the community together through shared prayer and worship.

Leaders and governors demonstrate a deep commitment to keeping prayer and liturgy at the heart of the school's Catholic life and mission. The collective worship policy includes a strategy for developing pupils' participation as they progress through school. Those responsible for the GIFT team effectively support its members, who speak enthusiastically about their responsibilities and demonstrate a joyful witness to faith. The annual plan of provision identifies opportunities to celebrate significant moments in the liturgical year and the life of the school. It provides an overview of the celebrations available to pupils and the wider community. Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate training to lead prayer and liturgy and provide additional support where needed. This preparation supports staff in fulfilling their responsibilities within the school's daily prayer life. Leaders, governors, and staff support the school and parish community by attending Sunday Mass at the parish church each month. Families and pupils are encouraged to join them, strengthening relationships through shared worship. Monitoring of prayer and liturgy takes place. However, leaders recognise that its frequency needs to increase so that evaluation informs further improvements in provision and its contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Developing this process would help leaders build a clearer picture of the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy across the school.

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Information about the school

Full name of school	St Marys Roman Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	119663
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8883771
Full postal address of the school	Lime Road, Haslingden, Rossendale, Lancashire, BB4 5NP
School phone number	01706 214747
Headteacher or Head of School	Miss Donna McNicoll
Chair of Governors	Mr James McMahon
School Website	www.st-marys-haslingden.lancs.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	12 February 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

Fiona Robinson	Lead
Chris Horridge	

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