CATHOLIC SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

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

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

URN: 141826

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Shrewsbury

07 October 2026 – 08 October 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

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

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

1

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

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

- Leaders, staff and pupils are deeply committed to living the mission statement values of 'safe, valued and loved' each day.
- Strong links between the school, parish, pupils, and families sustain a flourishing Catholic community.
- Leaders and governors lead improvements in religious education and prayer and liturgy by their commitment to developing staff knowledge, expertise and confidence.
- Pupils value daily prayer and the enrichment activities provided as opportunities to practise and deepen their faith.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and is seen in active engagement in lessons and times of prayer.

What the school needs to improve

- Leaders should build staff confidence in using effective questioning to deepen pupils' understanding.
- Ensure that pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve their work in religious education by asking questions linked to prior learning and to deepening their understanding.
- Support pupils to develop their reflection and self-evaluation in prayer and liturgy and in religious education and then use their feedback to improve their understanding and nurture their participation.

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 readily embrace the school's mission statement, which is revisited annually. They explain that they are loved as unique individuals, made by God. Pupils live out the values of 'safe, valued and loved' in their daily relationships and show a secure understanding of the principles of Catholic social teaching in their commitment to practical service. Their support for Caritas, harvest donations to the local foodbank and outreach by the Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) team, Mini Vinnies, Eco group, and school choir demonstrate their keen sense of responsibility to others. With the parish, the school has links to Nigeria. A local Rotary group award recognises the GIFT team's work in the local area. Pupils are happy, feel safe and cared for, and trust all adults and peers to support them. From the earliest years, pupils show respect and care for themselves and others. Their behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school. Pupils discuss their learning thoughtfully and recognise how different traditions deepen their understanding of their own and others' cultures and beliefs. Through reading bible stories and helping younger pupils to plan and prepare celebrations of the word, the GIFT team makes a valuable contribution to the school's mission.

The deep commitment to ensuring all feel 'safe, valued and loved' shapes every aspect of school life and is evident in service to the school, parish, and local community. Staff are strong, positive role models, following Mary's example of love and care. Relationships are caring, respectful and joyful, and vulnerable pupils receive compassionate pastoral support. This strong culture of welcome extends to families from different cultures and faith traditions. A parent says 'I am not a Catholic but have been positively overwhelmed by just how inclusive the school is'. Practical support, including access to school uniform and work with marginal

groups, is valued by families. Staff willingly give time to supporting parish life and first sacraments celebrations. The school's Catholic identity is explicit in prayer spaces, liturgical displays, pupils' religious artwork, crucifixes, and displays linked to scripture. For example, a challenge to grow sunflowers is linked to the creation story in Genesis 1. The carefully curated library provides bibles and books with religious themes alongside information and reading books. The school uses '*Life to the Full*' to deliver relationships, sex, and health education, has consulted with parents on recent changes, and meets diocesan requirements.

Leaders and governors are passionate about the Church's mission in education. Their joyful witness is evident in whole-school, parish, community, and global projects. Their work sustains flourishing partnerships that benefit the wider community. Leaders and governors engage fully in diocesan professional development and encourage staff participation. Governors make a highly significant contribution through systematic evaluation, support, expertise, and challenge. Leaders and governors work hard to engage with parents and carers through newsletters, the school's social media pages, consultations, parents' evenings, Masses, Stay and Pray, fundraising events and celebrations. This ensures that parental views are considered, and that the mission of the school is shared widely and understood by most parents. One says, 'We really appreciate the way the children are involved'. Leaders and governors are inspirational witnesses to the Gospel. Catholic social teaching is an integral part of their strategic planning, has a high focus, and is woven through the curriculum. Their commitment to those in need is shown in community service, caring for the environment and support for staff well-being. High-quality professional development, induction of new staff, and coaching and mentoring build a strong and effective team, while pupils' suggestions are actively sought and used to inform improvement.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

2

Pupil outcomes

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

2

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

Leadership

1

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

Pupils enjoy religious education lessons and, from the earliest years, develop the ability to recall prior learning. They achieve well and build their knowledge over time. Their willingness to participate, ask questions and sustain discussion provides clear evidence of engagement. Written work is very well presented and shows good progress. Pupils speak confidently, refer to scripture, and use appropriate religious language. One pupil comments 'RE makes me think about what Jesus would do'. They explain how religious commitment influences their lives and use examples of Jesus's teaching and actions to describe how God wants us to live. Younger Key Stage 2 pupils connect learning about creation and stewardship of our world with Pope Francis's teaching in *Laudato Si*. Older pupils apply principles of Catholic social teaching, including human dignity and rights and responsibilities, when studying the Ten Commandments. Attainment in religious education is at least comparable with other core subjects and behaviour is outstanding in all lessons. Pupils understand that teachers' written feedback identifies next steps for their learning, but they cannot always explain how well they are doing. Pupils need further support to formulate questions that help them to make sense of their learning and deepen their understanding.

Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge, teach confidently, and maintain high expectations of their pupils. Planning is linked to assessment and builds upon pupils' prior knowledge. Lessons are engaging and well-thought-out. In the Early Years' Foundation Stage, engaging practical and creative experiences support and extend children's learning, in line with religious education early learning goals. In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils are given

opportunities to present their learning in a variety of ways including art and drama. This encourages the engagement of all groups of pupils. Teachers revisit previous learning and use effective questioning to help pupils to make connections. Verbal and written feedback encourage pupils to think more deeply. However, not all pupils are aware of where they are in their learning, or how they could improve. Advice on how to formulate questions would help pupils to understand more and deepen their learning. Pupils' efforts are recognised and celebrated through class pages on the school website, which also provides information for parents. Time for reflection in lessons further supports pupils' understanding and spiritual development. Moderation of pupils' work with other Catholic schools supports teachers' judgements and increases their confidence in planning and delivering religious education.

Leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that the religious education curriculum is faithful to the *Religious Education Directory*. Enrichment activities include visits to the Laudato Si learning environment and links with agencies such as Caritas. Religious education is fully resourced, and leaders provide time, advice, and resources to support the planning of religious education so that it meets the needs of different groups of pupils. This adapted planning now needs to be applied consistently across the school. Leaders and governors ensure that diocesan training and formation, in-school training, coaching, and modelling support staff and newly appointed teachers. The relatively new subject leader has a clear vision and the expertise to secure further improvement in religious education. Senior leaders and the previous subject leader offer advice and support if needed. A member of staff reports 'The RE lead is extremely knowledgeable and supportive, always offering guidance and having a strong understanding of the *Religious Education Directory* and how to implement it'. Leaders' and governors' strategic actions to improve teaching and learning include moderation, increased monitoring, and targeted support for new staff, which contribute to teaching that is good across the school.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

1

Pupil outcomes

1

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

From nursery onwards, pupils engage quietly and reverently in times of silence and engage readily with known prayers. The parish priest, parishioners and parents value pupils' respectful participation and singing at Mass and in liturgical celebrations. Pupils experience personal and communal prayer, and times of meditative silence. They explain why particular prayers, symbols and passages of scripture are used at different times of the liturgical year, referring to Lenten prayer trails, the May procession and crowning of Mary, and the rosary walk in October. The GIFT team is a considerable asset, working with classes to prepare and support times of prayer. With the Mini Vinnies, they ensure classroom prayer tables have appropriate resources for the liturgical season. Pupils increasingly evaluate the quality of prayer, although they need further support to identify ways this could be improved. They talk confidently about the different prayers they learn as they progress through the school. Pupils say how prayer and liturgy, their learning in religious education and scripture inspire action such as visiting a care home to talk to residents and caring for the school and local environment. Pupils value the opportunities they have to celebrate prayer and liturgy during retreats, pilgrimages, and parish and school celebrations.

Prayer and liturgy are central to daily life in school and to other significant celebrations, including the 200th anniversary of St Mary's parish in 2025. A wide range of prayer experiences across the school year includes scripture, silence, stations of the cross, the rosary, a Lenten walk and retreat days. These offer creative and traditional opportunities to encounter God. Scripture is at the heart of prayer, is carefully chosen, and appropriate to the liturgical season. Staff, including senior leaders, model strong practice through active

participation. This enables pupils to see adults living the prayer life of the school. Staff enrich times of worship through music and support one another and pupils in planning and preparing high-quality experiences of prayer and liturgy. This supports pupil and staff understanding of the different traditions of the Church and how they are expressed through prayer and liturgy. Parents, carers, and families are included through opportunities such as, 'Stay & Pray', family Masses, and seasonal celebrations and sacramental celebrations. Indoor and outdoor prayer spaces are available throughout the year. Groups of pupils and staff ensure that these are well-maintained and appropriately resourced.

Prayer and liturgy are integral to the life of this school, and the recent policy aligns with the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory.* Leaders have a clear strategy for supporting and developing pupils' skills progressively, resulting in increased pupil confidence. Careful planning ensures that the Eucharist, key dates, and liturgical seasons are celebrated in church or school. Leaders and governors prioritise staff formation through diocesan training, coaching, modelling, and staff meetings. Staff value the support of the skilled and dedicated headteacher, religious education coordinator and other senior leaders. They report that this increases their confidence in preparing and leading prayer and liturgy and in supporting pupils to undertake particular ministries. Leaders share their understanding of the Church's variety of traditional ways of praying and their familiarity with the liturgical year with staff and pupils. Staff say 'Throughout the year we celebrate the different seasons of the Church and come together in shared prayer and hymns'. High-quality art and artefacts enhance prayer and liturgy in the school. Leaders and governors review its quality and impact and seek pupils' views. This work should now lead more consistently to planned improvements in the range and variety of prayer and liturgy, such as further opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Mary's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	141826
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8953531
Full postal address of the school	Belgrave Avenue, CONGLETON, CW12 1HT
School phone number	01260 274690
Headteacher or Head of School	Miss Amy Butterfield
Chair of Governors	Mrs Val Bridge
School Website	www.saintmaryscongleton.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	2 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	16 January 2020
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The Inspection Team

Carol Morgan	Lead
Susan Ralph	

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