

# DIOCESE OF MENEVIA



## Inspection Report on the Religious Dimension of the School

<b>Headteacher:</b>	<b>Mrs Sharon Nichols</b>
<b>Reporting Inspector:</b>	<b>Mr Joseph Skivington</b>
<b>Accompanying Inspector:</b>	<b>Mrs Claire Dineen</b>
<b>Inspection date:</b>	<b>November 21-22<sup>nd</sup> 2011</b>
<b>Chair of Governors:</b>	<b>Mrs Wendy Driscoll</b>
<b>Type of School:</b>	<b>Primary</b>
<b>Age range of pupils:</b>	<b>3-11 years</b>
<b>Number on roll:</b>	<b>93 + 18 Part Time Nursery</b>
<b>Date of previous Inspection:</b>	<b>November 2005</b>
<b>School Address:</b>	<b>Britannia Road Pembroke Dock Pembrokeshire SA72 6PD</b>
<b>Tel. no.</b>	<b>01646 682879</b>
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<b>Parish(es) served:</b>	<b>St. Mary's Pembroke Dock St. Joseph's Pembroke</b>
<b>Appropriate Authority:</b>	<b>Pembrokeshire</b>

***Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Menevia and inspection of Denominational Education under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005***

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key 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 also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on prospects for improvement.

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice or practise that is both consistent and highly effective.
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement

The table below shows the terms that Diocesan inspectors use and a broad idea of their meaning. It is for guidance only.

<b>Proportion</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>With very few exceptions</b>	<b>Nearly all</b>
<b>90% or more</b>	<b>Most</b>
<b>70% or more</b>	<b>Many</b>
<b>60% or more</b>	<b>A majority</b>
<b>Close to 50%</b>	<b>Half / around half</b>
<b>Below 40%</b>	<b>A minority</b>
<b>Below 20%</b>	<b>Few</b>
<b>Less than 10%</b>	<b>Very few</b>

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Diocesan website: [www.dioceseofmenevia.org](http://www.dioceseofmenevia.org)

## Context

St. Mary's is a smaller than average size primary school with 111 pupils on roll (including nursery), of whom 30% are baptised Catholics. It serves the parishes of St. Mary's Pembroke Dock and St. Joseph's Pembroke. It is located in an area of high unemployment and challenging socio economic circumstances, a fact borne out by the high percentage of FSM (37%) and significant pupil/family mobility. The number of pupils with SEN is above average at 28%, and there are four pupils with EAL. Prior attainment on entry is below expectation. The majority of teachers are Catholic with four having a CCRS qualification or equivalent. The RE coordinator is relatively new to the post, having been appointed in the last academic year. At the time of writing the post of head teacher has been advertised due to the imminent retirement of the present head.

## Summary

<b>How effective is the school in providing Catholic education?</b>	Good
<p>St. Mary's provides a good Catholic education for all its pupils. It is a fully inclusive community, welcoming every person as an individual made in the image of God. Strong, fruitful links with parents and the local community are well established. Pupils make a significant contribution to the Catholic life of the school and benefit enormously from it. Their response to collective worship is wholehearted and every child, regardless of faith background or none, is invited and encouraged to participate in the good spiritually enriching provision for prayer life and liturgy. Leadership and management take good care to monitor and promote the strong Catholic ethos of the school.</p> <p>Outcomes from the religious education programme are satisfactory, the result of mainly satisfactory provision, with some good practice noted during the inspection. The leadership and management of RE is an area for development, particularly in terms of establishing and embedding assessment procedures and the tracking of pupils progress. There are signs that this aspect is being tackled but impact on learning and progress is not yet evident.</p>	
<b>What are the school's prospects for improvement?</b>	Adequate
<p>The areas raised by the previous inspection have been tackled to some good effect. The planning, evaluation and recording of collective worship is successfully embedded, with the result that liturgy and assemblies are more meaningful and involve the children to a greater extent. The mission statement is clear and well understood by staff, pupils and parents. Activities and strategies to raise progress and attainment to good have not yet</p>	



had the desired effect but there are signs of movement and improvement. The prospects for improvement are going to depend to a significant degree on the effectiveness of the RE leadership and that of the new, yet to be appointed, head teacher.

### **Recommendations and Required Actions**

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

**R1: To develop the effectiveness of the leadership and management of RE, particularly in terms of assessment for learning, through challenging performance management targets, close governing body overview and support, and sufficient time to plan and support the teaching of the subject.**

**R2: To increase the quantity and quality of pupils' written response to the topics they are covering by setting tasks which encourage independence, reflection, empathy and evaluation skills.**

**R3: To encourage pupils to take more ownership of their liturgies, not only by participating, but by developing the key skills of planning and presentation.**

### **What happens next?**

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by the Diocese.

### **Main Findings**

#### **KQ1. How good are outcomes?**

The outcomes for pupils are good. All are involved in the Catholic life of the school with no group or individual excluded and they make a valuable contribution towards it, as well as towards their own learning. They feel their voice is heard through the school council

where there are opportunities for feedback on their learning. The older pupils look after the younger children with real concern, giving their time for paired reading, while their capacity for praise and forgiveness is marked in their good behaviour. They respond very generously to the needs of others through many local projects, such as sponsored walks, Walk For Life, and global charities such as World Gifts, Cafod, Romania Shoebox Appeal and they were involved in Mission Together, linking with the Methodist church.

Their response to and participation in the prayer life of the school is positive, reverent and in the case of the assembly during the inspection, very well prepared, with enthusiastic singing, clear reading and delightful role play. Prayers are said both in English and Welsh with meaning. They compose some beautiful class prayers, which are kept and used daily, such as the St. Non's Prayer Book. They themselves said they would love to plan and present their own liturgies if given the invitation to do so. The pupils attitude and demeanour at prayer, even the youngest, is positive and demonstrates their growing understanding of the sacred. They absorb and internalise the shared values lived out in this distinctive Catholic ethos and they themselves are the good fruit and outcome of the school's mission.

Achievement and progress in religious education are adequate at both key stages. Pupils come to the school with below and poor average prior religious knowledge and experience and make satisfactory progress so that by the end of Year 6 one can see improved knowledge and understanding but at a level still below what is expected. The reason progress is not better is because independent learning is not consistently developed, and apart from composing prayers, they have little opportunity to respond to what they have learned, for example, through reflective, imaginative, empathetic writing. Copied out work does not fully engage the pupil or encourage independent learning, and inevitably makes assessment of progress more difficult. Standards and quality of work for these same pupils in their literacy books show what could be achieved in RE. The rate of progress for those pupils with special educational needs and EAL is similar to that of the others because there is some extra support and tasks, which are tailored to their learning needs. Pupils would benefit from more peer learning and assessment as a powerful aid to learning.

#### **KQ2. How good is provision?**

Provision for the Catholic education of the pupils is adequate overall. The provision for prayer life is good because it very effectively meets the spiritual needs of the whole school community through the Mass, assemblies and liturgies, the reception of the Sacraments and the many opportunities for prayer and stillness. The sacramental preparation programme is well run between schools and parish. The liturgical year is marked and celebrated with drama, music, and colourful displays, particularly Advent, Lent and Easter. The school chaplain is a frequent and supportive presence in school, and in the celebration of Mass in the adjacent parish church.

The curriculum satisfactorily meets the needs of all groups of pupils, building on their prior experience, as well as meeting the Curriculum Directory requirements for religious education, such as the allocation of time, and the appropriate Welsh dimension. The subject needs to get down to the business of translating the syllabus into challenging schemes of work, lesson plans and clear, measurable objectives. Relationship education



is dealt with sensitively and clearly from a Catholic point of view following the All that I Am syllabus. The beliefs of other faiths are explored through topics in the curriculum. Resources are managed satisfactorily, including IT, art and music. Attractive displays around the school reflect the liturgical year and the current topics being studied.

The quality of teaching is adequate, with some good practice observed during the inspection. Where teaching is good it engages pupils in their own learning and results in good progress, as in a lesson on Baptism which moved on from learning the symbols of the sacrament to allow them to reflect on how relevant it is to their own lives, with the teacher sharing her own experience. Less effective teaching does not provide enough activity and challenge, the pace is slow and particularly frustrating for the more able pupils condemned to a diet of copying out religious facts. Teaching assistants provide sound support and enable the class to be split into smaller groups with some differentiated tasks. The lesson activity, however, too often takes over from the lesson objective, and takes the place of teachers teaching for meaning. Isolated examples of empathetic writing, such as a letter to Moses from disgruntled followers in the desert, were well done and brought the story to life.

Assessment and tracking of pupils' progress is at a very early stage and must become a key priority if standards of achievement are to rise. The use of level indicators are beginning to appear, for example in Years 3 and 4, but with no discernable impact as yet. The early focus of the RE coordinator has been the provision for spiritual life, but attention must now be turned swiftly to assessment for learning so that both teacher and child know where they are and what to aim for. This will inject a much needed element of accountability which is at present missing, in terms of, for instance, the monitoring of exercise books. The scrutiny of written work revealed marking which is inconsistent and not always helpful in showing the child how to improve or stretch their mental ability.

### **KQ3. How good are leadership and management?**

Leadership and management promote the Catholic life of the school well, with clear self evaluating procedures that include monitoring, appraisal and planning for improvement of the spiritual life and practice of the school. The recent drive to improve and deepen the spiritual life of the whole school community has been very fruitful, with dedicated Inset at the start of the year for all staff on spirituality and Catholic education. The senior leadership team ensures a good quality provision for collective worship. The governing body is totally committed to preserving the strong, distinctive, Catholic ethos, and through recent changing times has kept the mission of the school firmly at the forefront of its deliberations and overview. The governors, under their new chair, are aware of the pressing need to turn the focus on improvement of religious education academic outcomes, in order to shift them from satisfactory to good and better. It is too early to judge their capacity for incisive challenge and establishing clear accountability through performance management targets. The parish priest gives what support he can in explaining the Faith and celebrating the liturgical year.

Leadership and management of the religious education programme can only be adequate, given the lack of evidence of impact of moves to improve the only satisfactory learning and progress of pupils. The subject has not been effectively monitored and



improved in the past by senior leadership and governors, through incisive quality assurance and self assessment; indeed, not for quite some time. There is evidence that the areas needing development are now being addressed and improvement planned, for instance, the initial introduction of assessment specifically using the level indicators. Teachers do have sound knowledge of the subject, are good role models, and have the opportunity to share good practice.

The provision and promotion of community cohesion is good. At the heart of a Catholic school is an openness and welcome, just as Jesus Himself invited all to come to Him. The school is a good example of inclusiveness and takes a number of the broken and vulnerable, troubled and troublesome. The school has a clear policy on wider community cohesion and does what it can, given its somewhat isolated situation, to provide a wider experience for the pupils, such as the links to other countries as in The Gambia, understanding the plight of others less fortunate, and doing something about it through charity fundraising for Cafod and the Romanian appeal. This strengthens their sense of moral obligation and exercises their generosity, which is impressive. The school has achieved the Silver Global Citizenship award and has built up fruitful links with the local community and other schools in the Pembroke family. The school provides a much needed and successful After School club for other local children besides its own pupils. The RE curriculum offers an opportunity to explore the beliefs and customs of the other major world religions and other cultures, and the school has given a warm welcome to its Muslim children, and their families. Those children of other faiths and none feel they are able to express their own beliefs comfortably, and all feel included and welcome in every area of school life. Parish links are close and give the pupils a sense of the wider Church and its mission. Parents and carers are welcome and frequent visitors to the school and support their children's education by their presence, such as at Mass and assembly.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Responses to parent questionnaires**

Eight parental questionnaires were replied to and all of them strongly agreed that their children were happy and making expected progress in school. They spoke warmly of the strong Catholic ethos and the shared values of the school community.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Evidence Base**

This inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors. The inspectors visited 5 religious education (RE) lessons to observe teaching and learning, pupils' behaviour, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, including an assembly, and looked at a range of evidence, including key documentation such as the school's development plan, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in RE, and the pupils' own work.