

# Report of the Denominational (Section 48) Inspection of

Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

## ***St Mary's Catholic Senior School***

DfES No: 873 6001

URN: SC 015290

For Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Chair of Governors: Mrs Denise Wilkinson

Headteacher: Miss Charlotte Avery

Denominational Inspector: Miss Fenella Matthew

Date of Inspection: 5th May 2010

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## **DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL**

St Mary's is an independent Catholic day and boarding school for 499 girls aged 11 – 18 founded 1898 by IBVM sisters, near the centre of Cambridge in Our Lady and the English Martyrs parish. The school has a wide catchment but the main parishes are OLEM; St Lawrence's; St Philip Howard and Cambourne. Students mainly come from fairly wealthy backgrounds although several come from less wealthy backgrounds and receive bursaries. 26% of students are Catholic; 54% from other Christian denominations and 5.4% from other faiths. 17% have Special Educational Needs but none have Statements. For just over 10% of students English is an additional language.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL.**

**Overall Grade:1**

The school's self evaluation is accurate, showing insight and reflective practice and an absence of complacency as well as willingness to learn. There is a sensitive understanding of and deep commitment to what it means to be a Catholic school. A sense of vision is evident enabling appropriate goals to be set and assiduously worked towards to consolidate success and secure further improvement. The issues for development raised in the last Diocesan inspection have been addressed effectively and outcomes for pupils continue to be very high.

### **What the school needs to do to improve further?**

#### **Recommendations and required action.**

- Work towards reinstating the School Chapel;
- Consider how to manage the change of Chaplain including the possibility of appointing a lay Chaplain;
- Continue monitoring the quality of Collective Worship;
- Continue developing tracking and monitoring in RE to inform planning for individual students including Learning Difficulties and Disabilities and Gifted and Talented;
- Continue developing the bank of differentiated RE resources.

**PUPILS. How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups.** **Overall Grade:1**

**A) To what extent do pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school?**

Students have a very strong sense of belonging to the school community, which has a solid commitment of inclusivity. Students take on positions of responsibility in the Catholic life of the school and wider community very well. Catholic Social Justice is prominent and girls are pro-actively involved in extensive Charity fund raising. Students are very appreciative of the Chaplain. There is a living sense of respect for others' beliefs and acceptance of everyone as equal.

**B) How well do pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship, sacramental and prayer life?**

Students involve themselves fully in the school's prayer life which includes a rich variety of experiences: Mass; Confession; and because of the emphasis on inclusivity and the faith composition of the student body, ecumenical services. Students are very aware of the needs of others and often come forward asking to present an assembly and are exceptionally well supported by their peers. Girls prepare form prayers for non-assembly days. At School Masses many girls volunteer to take part in a variety of roles. They show willingness to engage reverently in celebration, quiet reflection and worship. Collective worship is integral to life at St Mary's and contributes substantially to students' spiritual and moral development.

**C) How well do pupils achieve & enjoy their learning in RE?**

In all lessons observed students engaged very well and obviously enjoyed their learning. The number of students opting to take A' level RE and going on to further study at university attest to the deep interest they find in the subject. Students take a pride in their work and value RE as a subject in which they can achieve. Students of all abilities are enabled to achieve well and find their learning in RE both challenging and rewarding.

**Quality of all pupils' learning and their progress including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.**

Progress is very good in all key stages. Students' application, concentration and focus are consistently high. They become religiously literate to a high level. Students persevere with challenging tasks and are committed to their own achievement. Over the past five years positive Value Added values have ranged from +0.75 to +1.32.

**Pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education.**

Standards of attainment are consistently very high. Key Stage 3 attainment is tracked using the whole school system with which the RE department is working to incorporate Levels of Attainment. The whole cohort is entered for GCSE RE and at least 95% have gained A\* - C over the past five years. AS and A' level results are also high with the percentage of A-B grades at A2 ranging from 75% - 100% over the past three years.

**LEADERS AND MANAGERS. How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the school?** Overall Grade:1

**A) How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils?**

The leadership team is deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. They lead by example and their clear convictions are a source of inspiration for the whole community. The school effectively promotes good relationships with the Catholic and wider community. There is high quality in-service training to develop staff understanding and commitment to the Church's mission in education and they respond well. In the school's documentation and daily life there is unequivocal evidence that the Catholic mission of the school is a priority. Honest self-evaluation informs planning for ongoing improvement.

**B) How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for RE and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils?**

Whole school and departmental self-evaluation is key to St Mary's approach, leading to effective planning for improvement. The Head of RE effectively monitors the work of the department regularly. The living commitment of the whole department to the highest quality in their work with students is exemplary. As a result, outcomes for most students are good and some are exceptionally high.

**C) The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met?**

The governors discharge their statutory and canonical duties appropriately; they are influential in determining the Catholic nature and shaping the direction of the school when specific decisions are to be made. Governors are well informed about users' views of the school and hold the leadership to account for tackling important areas for development. However in the light of the increasingly pressing nature of regulation, compliance and other governor business, the Governors could advert more explicitly and frequently to their responsibility for the oversight of the Catholic nature of the school to keep this pre-eminent character of the school prominent in all discussions.

**D) How effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion.**

Leaders and managers at all levels promote Community Cohesion very effectively and inclusion is a very prominent goal and shared vision. Much attention has been given to ensuring that the provision for prayer, Collective Worship and the school's liturgical life are accessible to all and this has been achieved very successfully. The Chaplain makes himself readily available to the whole school community. The Religious Education curriculum actively promotes knowledge and respect for all faiths, mutual understanding and integrity, enabling students to explore and develop their own and others' beliefs and values. The school is very involved in serving the common good and looking beyond themselves to the needs of others.

**PROVISION. How effective is the provision for Catholic education:**

**Overall Grade:1**

**A. The quality of the Sacramental and Prayer life of the school.**

Mass is celebrated for the whole school on Holy Days, the start and end of the year, and Year 11 and Year 13 Leavers' Masses. There is a weekly voluntary Mass before school. In light of the faith composition of the student population, the school has additionally developed some more ecumenical services which contribute to a rich prayer life well suited to the backgrounds of the pupils and the Catholic character of the school. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available in school in Advent and Lent.

**B. Quality of teaching and learning in RE.**

Taking into account **The Assessment and academic guidance in RE.**

The teaching of RE is highly effective in enthusing students and ensuring that they learn extremely well. Impressive subject knowledge is applied consistently to challenge and inspire students and ensure they make excellent progress. Lesson planning is effective taking into account learning styles and needs of all students. Lessons are well paced and resources are of good quality. Regular assessment, including self-assessment, ensures that students know how well they are doing and how to improve. The RE department is keen to further develop the use of assessment and monitoring to inform planning and target setting in line with ongoing whole school strategy and to involve students even more fully in this.

**C. The extent to which RE curriculum meets pupils' needs.**

The RE curriculum meets students' needs very well and contributes well to their spiritual and moral development. Its overarching aim is the holistic education of the entire person in a secure atmosphere of respect for all. Curriculum content meets the Bishops' Conference requirements fully and the time allocation for KS4 exceeds 10%. In KS3 the time allocation is 8%. This is supplemented by Reflection days and other well-planned enrichment activities. The RE department energetically and successfully seeks to improve the coherence, relevance and excitement of the learning opportunities. As a result, students have the opportunity to be enthusiastic and highly motivated learners.

## INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<b>Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, Grade 2, good, Grade 3 satisfactory, and Grade 4 unsatisfactory.</b>	<b>Grade</b>
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### Overall Effectiveness.

**OVERALL GRADE:1**

How good are outcomes for <b>Pupils</b> , Grade from section.	<b>1</b>
How effective is the <b>Provision</b> in promoting Catholic education; Grade from section	<b>1</b>
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	<b>1</b>

### PUPILS. How good are outcomes for pupils, taking account of variations between different groups.

**OVERALL GRADE: 1**

To what extent do pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school?	<b>1</b>
How well do pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship, sacramental and prayer life?	<b>1</b>
How well do pupils achieve & enjoy their learning in RE? <i>Taking into account the 3 areas below:</i>	<b>1</b>
❖ Enjoyment. How well ALL pupils enjoy their learning as shown by their interest, enthusiasm and engagement with the subject AND	
❖ Progress. The quality of all pupils' learning and their progress including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.	
❖ Pupils' standards of attainment in RE.	<b>1</b>

### LEADERS AND MANAGERS. How effective are leaders and managers in developing the Catholic life of the school?

**OVERALL GRADE: 1**

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils?	<b>1</b>
How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for RE and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils?	<b>1</b>
The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met?	<b>2</b>
How effectively leaders and managers promote Community Cohesion.	<b>1</b>

**PROVISION. How effective is the provision for Catholic education:**

**OVERALL GRADE: 1**

The quality of the collective worship, sacramental and prayer life of the school.	<b>1</b>
Quality of teaching and learning in RE. <i>Taking into account the aspect below</i>	<b>2</b>
❖ The effectiveness of assessment in Religious Education	
The extent to which RE curriculum meets pupils' needs.	<b>1</b>



# EAST ANGLIA DIOCESAN SCHOOLS' SERVICE

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## **Letter to students explaining the findings from the diocesan inspection.**

21<sup>st</sup> May 2010

Dear Students

### **Diocesan Inspection of St Mary's Senior Catholic School, Cambridge**

Thank you for making me so welcome at your school. Thank you to all those students who showed me round and came to speak to me and showed me your work. I was very interested in your views of your school. I enjoyed being present with you for part of your Religious Education lessons in all three key stages and in your assembly.

Here are some of the things I especially liked:

- You have a clear sense of belonging to the school community which has a strong sense of inclusivity;
- You take on positions of responsibility in the Catholic life of the school and in the wider community very well;
- Catholic Social Justice is prominent and you are pro-actively involved in extensive Charity fund raising;
- Your RE teachers plan interesting lessons for you which you enjoy, using varied activities, and their subject knowledge is impressive and deep.

I have asked your teachers to continue working towards reinstating the School Chapel and to continue monitoring the quality of Collective Worship. I have asked your teachers to continue developing tracking and monitoring in RE and to continue developing the bank of differentiated RE resources which will help all of you to achieve your potential.

Thank you again for your help. I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Miss F. Matthew

Diocesan Inspector