



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON
EDUCATION SERVICE

DENOMINATIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORT

Cottesmore St Mary, Catholic Primary School

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School Unique Reference Number: 114567

Headteacher:	Mrs Rachel Breen
Chair of Governors:	Mrs Sue Hollow
Lead Inspector:	Mr Stephen C Horsman
Associate Inspector:	Mrs Gill Askham
Inspection date:	2 nd March 2022
	Previous Inspection: 1
Overall Effectiveness	This Inspection: 1
Catholic Life:	1
Religious Education:	1
Collective Worship:	1

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS/CARERS AND PUPILS/STUDENTS

Cottesmore St Mary is an Outstanding Catholic school because:

The school promotes and lives out the Church's mission for education to place Christ and the teaching of the Church at the centre of each person's life. Through its Catholic life, and experience of religious education, everyone can live life to the full and be the best they can be. Parents/carers stated that the 'Catholic way of life is central to Cottesmore St Mary's ethos' and 'in this world we are living in we are blessed to have such a strong faith-based school providing peace and comfort of the love of God to our children.' Pupils told inspectors 'Jesus is the centre of our school – this is what the motto is all about.'

The quality of religious education is outstanding because evidence clearly shows most pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points, they are religiously literate and are committed to improving their knowledge. Highly effective planning by teachers with good pace in lessons and high expectations are evident. Data shows that there is parity with pupils who are disadvantaged or with SEND. The subject leader has an inspiring vision of outstanding teaching and learning which is modelled to all staff. There is high quality planning and assessment and full cooperation with the Bishops' Conference directives.

The quality of collective worship and prayer life is outstanding. Pupils are engaged and inspired and have a palpable enthusiasm for collective worship, communal singing is outstanding and collective worship is central to the life of all, pupils, staff, parents/carers, and governors. Leaders and governors are highly visible leaders and model excellent practice and regularly seek and engage with the views of all stakeholders.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cottesmore St Mary Catholic Primary School is a two-form entry, voluntary aided school in the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton and is in the Brighton and Hove Deanery of Catholic schools. The school serves the local community of Hove and specifically pupils from the 3 feeder parishes of St Peter's, Sacred Heart and St George's. In addition, the school belongs to the South Coast Teaching Alliance.

There are currently 420 pupils on roll. Due to demographic changes the percentage of pupils who are Catholic has dropped from 80% to 50% over the past 4 years. Seven of the pupils are Muslim, two Hindu, one Buddhist and 3 of other faiths. A number of pupils are of the Coptic Orthodox Church. 7% of pupils have no faith at all. There are 20 home languages spoken within the school with 28% of pupils having English as an additional language, and 45% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. 17% of pupils are known to be disadvantaged which is below the national average of 25%. 11.5% of pupils are on the SEND register, below the national average of 13% and 1.4% have an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP). Attendance is at 96.8%. 50% of teachers are Catholic, four hold CCRS and one holds a qualification in theology.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Develop pupil initiated voluntary acts of worship.
- Make the quality of feedback to pupils consistent by sharing outstanding practice already evident across the school.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school.
- The quality of provision of the Catholic life of the school.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school.

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is Outstanding.

Cottesmore St Mary is an authentic Catholic Christian community which radiates its Catholic ethos. The mission statement, encapsulated in the school's motto 'Mane Nobiscum Domine – Abide with us Lord' is central to the school and permeates all aspects of school life. It is developed through the school's mission to act as God wants us, to believe in ourselves and share our gifts and talents, to respect each other's differences and to show care for others in school, home, the local and wider community. Pupils were able to articulate the school mission statement to inspectors and this was demonstrable in the many ways the pupils responded to each other, to staff and to visitors.

Pupils appreciate, value and participate in the Catholic life as expressed in the mission statement. They expressed a clear understanding and showed deep respect for themselves and for others.

Pupils have a real sense of belonging to this school community, they feel safe and know to whom they should speak if they have any concerns. Pupils told inspectors that 'this school is like a family; it is like our home where we have everything we need to learn and grow.' Parents commented that all, including those not of the Catholic faith, are 'invited and included.'

Pupil engagement in Catholic life is a strength. Almost all pupils take a leading role in activities which promote the Catholic life of the school. Pupils told inspectors that they have an input into the life of the school, for example, they enjoyed talking about an initiative to recycle crisp packets to make blankets. They were also pro-active with current issues telling inspectors their ideas about how to help those in Ukraine. When asked why they felt this way, pupils told inspectors, 'Jesus would want us to help others as he did.' Charity work is extensive, for

example, fundraising ventures for CAFOD, and making donations to the local foodbank during lock down. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes reflect the Catholic character of the school.

Pupils value the input of the local clergy and take full advantage of opportunities for social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. They have opportunities to meet with one of the priests once a week for prayer and/or conversation. Pupil and staff well-being has a high priority as demonstrated where staff who could not be present at a staff retreat due to ill-health have been given the opportunity to make a private retreat.

Parent/carer questionnaires show the vast majority of parents/carers feel the Catholic ethos of Cottesmore St Mary has had a positive influence on their children. Responses include for example, 'the faith element to the school underpins its values and really does help to bring the religious aspects to life of the children.' 'I love the way such positive, loving, kind messages are integral to the children's education.' Parents/carers were clear that this is embedded within the school, 'Since starting school, we have noticed that his Christian faith and spiritualism is growing every day.'

The quality of provision of the Catholic life of the school is Outstanding.

The mission statement is central to the life of the school and informs all school policies and practice. It appears on all school policies and is a clear expression of the educative mission of the Church. Prayer is central to the school community, indeed as a teacher told inspectors, 'it flows through the week'. RHSE is thoughtfully planned in line with the teaching of the Church and the requirements of the DfE using a combination of the school's own resources and 'Journey in Love.' High standards of behaviour are modelled and the commitment to Catholic Social Teaching and care for our common home is tangible. The Headteacher's vision influences all that happens at Cottesmore St Mary, which is that every pupil leaves Year 6 'being the best they can be and witness a community of life-long learners with Christ at the centre'. Staff attend training with the diocese and in-house helping them to 'buy-in' to this vision and the expectations of the Catholic life of the school.

The local priests are involved in the Catholic life of the school, attending to support class acts of worship, making weekly visits to meet with pupils and celebrating Mass. Priests feel very welcome and very much part of the 'family.'

Pastoral care is a significant strength. This is exemplified by inspectors observing in lessons the particular care given to individual pupil's special needs. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and know who to speak with if they have any concerns. Parents/carers stated that there were no bullying issues, that the buddy system really helps, they can be like 'big brothers and sisters' and parents/carers told inspectors they 'want to say a big "thank you" to the school.'

Cottesmore St Mary Catholic Primary School is a community where all involved promote high standards of behaviour. Through modelling behavioural expectations, staff promote high standards of behaviour among the pupils which contributes to a harmonious community of mutual respect and forgiveness.

The curriculum, both in its academic and wider sense, reflects the school mission to live, love and learn in God's name. Catholic life permeates every aspect of the curriculum. Display work showed how religious education permeates other areas of the curriculum. The dignity of each person is at the heart of everything the school does, providing many opportunities for the moral and spiritual development of all pupils and staff.

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

Leaders and governors are totally committed to the Catholic life and character of the school. Interviews with members of the Governing Body illustrated that governors challenge as well as support the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) appropriately. Minutes of meetings evidenced that governors regularly attend acts of worship and offer feedback to the Full Governing Body. Governors were closely involved in writing the School Evaluation Form (SEF) for the Catholic School Inspection indeed emphasising that, as part of the process, governors not employed by the school reviewed the SEF. Governors monitor progress on the School Development Plan (SDP) and have regular focussed visits. School staff told inspectors they were involved in writing the CSI-SEF through being given the opportunity to review it and offer their own input.

Leadership is deeply committed to the Church's mission for education and is a source of inspiration for the whole community. Staff model good practice of Catholic life both within the school and the wider community. Their enthusiasm for the school is tangible. Staff told inspectors that 'the school is a Church community inclusive and caring of all.' The provision for Catholic life is reflected in the SDP where there is evidence of rigorous monitoring, challenge, and evaluation. Strategies for engagement with parents and carers are highly successful and welcomed by them. A number of parents/carers mentioned the newsletter as being a key source of communication and stated that staff were always available and willing to listen. The Governing Body is highly ambitious for the Catholic life of the school and is actively involved in its evaluation offering support and challenge as appropriate.

Leaders and governors help shape and support the vision and direction of the Catholic life of the school through strong links with the parish, the deanery and the diocese. They continuously monitor and evaluate the Catholic life of the school through conversations with parents/carers and pupils, reviewing portfolios, and attendance at various events. Governors stated that they carry out focussed monitoring visits which include learning walks, lesson observations, interrogation of data and work scrutiny. The whole curriculum contributes to pupils' spiritual life. This is exemplified though creative art programmes where pupils contribute to the design and colouring of religious education wall displays as observed during lessons and on displays.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in religious education.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education.

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education is Outstanding.

Almost all pupils make good progress from their starting point and progress of pupils with SEND is comparable with other groups. Conversations with pupils show that they really enjoy their learning. Pupils told inspectors, 'I love RE' and pupils told inspectors that they enjoy religious education because they 'like to work together'. Inspectors observed much enthusiasm among pupils especially in group work. In addition, pupils told inspectors that they would like 'more Scripture and more time for writing what we believe as Christians.'

Almost all pupils are religiously literate relative to their age and ability, are engaged learners and are committed to improving their knowledge and understanding. They engage in a variety of activities to aid their learning. Inspectors observed a variety of tasks including artwork, use of Playdough, written and extension questions. In an early years class pupils were building an altar and able to talk about some celebrations which may happen. There was a very good use of Teaching Assistants (TAs). In a KS1 lesson, inspectors observed a TA working with a small group of identified pupils. The pupils had received some pre-teaching in line with good practice and as a result the pupils behaved well, spoke confidently and were ready to be challenged.

A KS2 lesson on the symbols and beliefs of the Eucharist showed clear and detailed planning. Pupils displayed very good religious literacy and told inspectors religious education 'helps them to know God.' Clear and successful differentiation was also evident with next steps. They approach their learning with great interest, passion, and enthusiasm and, despite the challenge of the pandemic, achieve very well, shown through excellent quality of work.

Data shows pupils with SEND make progress comparable with other groups. Pupils know their targets and know how to respond to the comments of teachers. High standards of teaching in religious education was exemplified by work scrutiny and pupils who said that in religious education teachers 'always challenge us with additional questions.'

As a result of the variety of differentiated methods teachers used to capture pupils understanding in religious education the opportunity to think more deeply in religious education was demonstrated during lesson observations. Data shows that progress and attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 are broadly in line with reading and maths, and better than writing. Pupils approach lessons with great interest, passion and enthusiasm. Parents/carers also commented upon the religious education of their children one stating, 'my child regularly surprises me with his theological knowledge,' when visiting Chichester Cathedral 'a passer-by praised the depth of my son's knowledge about saints.'

The quality of teaching and assessment in religious education is Outstanding.

Lesson observations demonstrated that teachers are highly effective in planning high quality lessons linked to pupils' needs. Teachers know how individual pupils learn; therefore, lessons are structured to help all pupils to engage with the subject. Lessons observed during the inspection showed the majority of teaching is outstanding and never less than good. Teachers have a good level of confidence in their practice and have a good level of subject expertise. Most pupils concentrate very well and are rarely off task. Inspectors observed excellent behaviour for learning and pupils told inspectors they enjoy their religious education lessons. Some pupils show a profound theological understanding. One KS2 pupil on forgiveness said, 'When God forgives us it is like him scooping us up and making something small greater.'

Teachers' good level of subject knowledge is due to the support given by the subject leader for religious education and the Headteacher. This is consolidated through attendance at diocesan and in-house training. Teachers and support staff work well together. Every pupil is valued. In a lesson inspectors observed the love and care demonstrated by the class teacher for a pupil who needed support so that the pupil could be part of the class. There was a variety of tasks observed which engaged all pupils and enabled extension and independent learning for the more able. In the same lesson, academically more able pupils were given an activity by a TA for further stretch and challenge to which they responded with great enthusiasm.

Parents/carers told inspectors they are kept fully informed about progress and content through email and newsletters. Parent/carer questionnaires included many very positive comments about the religious education of their children. Parents wrote 'our son enjoys sharing the stories and lessons of the Bible that he learns in school.' Others stated that 'the school has really encouraged this love of religious education.' And parents/carers have 'regular communication as to what our children are learning in religious education'

Work scrutiny showed clear evidence of creativity in lessons through art, drama, design and music. There is also evidence of multi-faith teaching, and the volume of work was age appropriate. There are a good range of activities to suit the different learning styles, clear differentiation using 'mild, spicy, hot' approach and a growth in the use of Scripture was evident. In response to big questions there were excellent examples where the teacher has responded in writing to pupils' own questions.

There is evidence of good marking practice in some year groups. This good practice needs to be shared so that it is embedded across all groups. The work scrutiny indicates that pupils learn exceptionally well and as a result acquire knowledge quickly and in depth and are developing their understanding rapidly. It shows imagination, originality, independence and an advanced ability to interpret sources and symbols, ask deeper questions, understand nuance and subtlety, reflect and evaluate, engage with religious ideas and integrate them into their lives. Pupils know the lesson objectives for each lesson, and there is clear differentiation with focussed learning activities.

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

Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference in every respect and in each key stage. The required amount of 10% curriculum time is dedicated to religious education. The school follows the 'Come and See' programme in-line with the expectation of the diocese, new teachers are supported by the subject leader and attend training on 'Come and See' at the diocese. Religious education has full parity with other core subjects.

Leaders and governors have a completed self-evaluation of religious education which is rigorous, searching, and self-challenging. The governor lead for religious education regularly monitors religious education through focussed visits and provides detailed reports on the same. Governors meet with pupils, and they are aware of the standards in religious education through visits and work scrutiny. Outcomes from this are fed back to the Full Governing Body.

The Headteacher and subject leader hold the provision of religious education as a high priority and monitor the provision continuously. Strengths and challenges are fed into the religious education action plan. The subject leader for religious education is an inspirational leader with a clear vision of what makes outstanding teaching and learning which is modelled to other staff.

The subject leader has taken actions to address the targets for improvement from the last inspection and the monitoring visit. CPD for staff, deanery consultation and sharing of good practice has led to raised standards of presentation and high expectations across all year groups. There is more effective use of time for example more creative ways to involve pupils in introductions to lessons, strongest teachers monitor others, planning is shared, and team teaching is used to further drive improvement. The subject leader identifies outcomes as better, questioning is being used and more teaching is consistently outstanding. Support is in place to enable all teaching to be outstanding.

Staff told inspectors of the support they receive in the teaching of religious education from the time of their induction. They are supported in how to use 'Come and See' and have continuous lesson support and modelling of good practice. An Early Careers Teacher felt so much part of the school community and the support received that when the opportunity arose to stay at the school 'seized it with both hands'.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP / PRAYER AND PRAYER LIFE

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AND PRAYER LIFE

- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship and prayer life.
- The quality of provision for collective worship and prayer life.
- How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship and prayer life.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship and prayer life is Outstanding.

Acts of worship fully reflect the Catholic character of the school and are inclusive of those not of the Catholic faith. There was a palpable enthusiasm for collective worship reflected in the quality of the pupils' prayerful responses, the excellent communal singing and the prayerful silences. This was very evident in the Ash Wednesday service where pupils entered the hall with utmost decorum. Pupils played music to maintain the ambience. There was excellent use of symbolism with the word 'Alleluia' being rolled up by the pupils and handed to the priest. Most pupils took part in various roles during the service, reading, singing, and acting with confidence, respect, and reverence. As each pupil received the ashes, they left the hall in silence allowing those remaining to reflect using the Taizé chant, 'Jesus, Remember Me.'

Music was used effectively to create a prayerful ambience in all acts of worship observed and this was the norm as evidenced by inspectors' observations. The singing of the pupils during acts of worship observed was outstanding and inspiring, especially during the whole school worship where pupils engaged in two-part singing and signing.

Pupils in Year 2 upwards are supported in planning acts of worship by the teacher, giving them a planning sheet, which enables the pupils to create their own acts of worship. In Reception and Year 1 the teacher facilitates the preparation. Pupils told inspectors of occasions each week for prayer, with the priest, morning, lunch and the end of the day. In addition, the school has a beautiful prayer garden which pupils described as a calming place. A development is to let the pupils take the initiative in leading the community in a life of prayer providing opportunities for a voluntary act of worship organised and led by pupils.

Worship demonstrated a variety of approaches to prayer using scripture, religious artefacts, liturgical music, and other forms of prayer, both traditional and contemporary.

Parents/carers spoke highly of acts of worship and the impact on home life. Parents/carers stated that 'attending his first Mass was unforgettable and very special for us all.' And the school always arranges 'family focussed Masses such as harvest festival, nativity play and buddy Masses.' The response from parents/carers is encapsulated in one parent's comment, that 'everything from the daily prayers to the teaching, to the wonderful school Masses, really are very special.' In addition, parents/carers told inspectors that they are invited and welcomed to celebrations of collective acts of worship, Mass and Reconciliation.

Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of Liturgy and worship and its planning. They are actively supported by the priests who attend and lead acts of worship. They have a good depth of understanding of the Church's year and the symbols and rites of the Church. Liturgies are age appropriate, and staff told inspectors of the regular times for staff prayer which help in their spiritual development. Collective worship has a high priority in the school and is included in the SDP. Governors monitor the provision for collective worship through reports from the Headteacher, attendance at acts of worship, and discussions with parents/carers and pupils.

The quality of provision for collective worship and prayer life is Outstanding.

Collective worship is central to the life of the school and is at the heart of every school celebration, as a staff member told inspectors, 'It flows throughout the week.' It has a high priority in terms of planning and resourcing. Praying together is part of the daily experience of all pupils and staff and staff prayer is equally an integral part of all school activity. Mass is celebrated regularly and links with the local secondary school means the pupils are able to visit and celebrate Mass in the school's chapel.

Individual acts of worship have a clear purpose, message and direction and reflect a deep understanding of the liturgical year. They include opportunities for formal and spontaneous prayer, and for sacramental celebrations. This was evidenced in minutes of meetings and discussions with pupils. There were examples of preparation of prayers written by pupils on display. An act of worship in upper KS2 began with two pupils sharing a prayer they had composed. Pupils are proud of their prayer garden, which is used weekly for prayer, and is a space for anyone who wishes to have time to talk with the priests or a member of staff.

Opportunities are planned to attract all stakeholders and teachers are highly skilled in facilitating pupils' planning and delivering of collective worship. The Headteacher and subject leader for religious education has an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical heritage and rites and seasons. In one class worship observed, pupils were very respectful of each other, and everyone joined in, including support staff. Acts of worship are inclusive of all faiths and none. The school has recently diversified by including saints of other ethnicities and a greater number of female saints. Pupils felt included in the prayer life of the school and staff described collective worship as a having a strong community sense and all were included.

Staff also commented upon a recent staff retreat to Worth Abbey telling inspectors 'it was an amazing day' and staff who were unable to be present were included through regular contact during the day. One non-Catholic staff member stated, 'it gave me goose-bumps.'

Parents are very supportive of the collective worship of the school and commented upon the impact upon the children. One parent stated, 'my daughter is given exceptional opportunities to develop her faith. She writes prayers at home regularly, listens to faith songs and talks articulately about her faith.'

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship and prayer life is Outstanding.

Leaders and governors have expert knowledge of planning collective worship and prayer life and delivery of quality experiences of the same. They have a thorough understanding of the Church's year and prepare very relevant and age-appropriate experiences of collective worship. Inspectors' observations evidenced that the prayer life is clearly part of the rhythm of daily school life. Pupil response is outstanding. Their own written prayers are thoughtful and varied and, in an observation, supporting adults helped pupils with articulating prayers for peace.

Leaders are highly visible models of good practice and ensure a high priority is given to the development of quality experiences, regularly seeking the views of parents/carers, pupils, staff and others in order to further improve the experience of the Collective worship and prayer life of the school. Leaders and governors are effective in supporting the development of thought-provoking, age-appropriate and accessible collective worship for all pupils, irrespective of ability, faith or culture and parents/carers told inspectors that they are also invited to attend.

Collective worship and the prayer life of Cottesmore St Mary is seen as a priority in the professional development of staff and is part of staff training. Staff members told inspectors that their professional development includes training on collective worship. Leaders and governors are committed to further developing the leadership potential of all pupils to lead acts of worship for the community, such as encouraging a pupil initiative of pupil-led prayer groups. One parent wrote, 'my child enjoys the daily meditation and it is clear that his religious beliefs are important to him. I feel that the school plays an instrumental role in fostering those beliefs.'

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education?

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Catholic Life

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

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The quality of provision for the Catholic life of the school.

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

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Religious Education

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.

1

The quality of teaching and assessment in religious education.

1

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

1

Collective Worship and Prayer Life

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

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The quality of provision for collective worship and prayer life.

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

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