

**Catholic Diocese of Northampton  
Interim Monitoring Visit  
15th March 2018**

**St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Aston-le-Walls [URN 122040]**

Since the last Section 48 inspection in May 2014, there have been significant staff changes in this small primary school. The new Head Teacher (HT), ably supported by the Liturgy and Worship lead teacher and the newly appointed Religious Education (RE) lead teacher and other members of staff, ensure all activities are underpinned by the school's Catholic foundation and driven by the mission statement to ensure the school is 'a place of excellence with Christ at its centre'. In September 2017 the school introduced 'Rising Stars', a wrap-around provision offering before and after school care. The senior leadership team has ensured that areas from the last inspection have been addressed and continue to be monitored. Excellent leadership means the school has the capacity to maintain its current grade of outstanding.

The HT is using the new diocesan SEF-RE format to undertake a thorough analysis of the effectiveness of the school. Whilst this is an ongoing process, the SEF-RE already correctly identifies areas for development and provides evidence of work which will, eventually, be supported by more impact statements. The school development plan includes the RE subject leader's action plan which details pertinent targets and success criteria for the current year.

St Mary's is a friendly, welcoming community which reflects its Catholic identity and values. There are attractive displays around the building and each class has an RE board and RE focal point. Prayer is a central part of the everyday life of the school and this extends outside where a second area is being developed to provide an additional space for reflection. The HT led the collective worship observed and it included pupil participation, lovely visual aids, joyful singing and the tasking of the faith ambassadors from each class to take a reminder of the message back to their peers. The school chaplain is a regular visitor and his input and support is greatly valued by all members of the school community. The chaplain together with the HT, the Liturgy and Worship lead teacher and the new RE lead teacher are a very effective chaplaincy team.

Pupils enjoy RE; they are attentive, enthusiastic and take pride in their work. Their books are well presented and marked with thinking points to add challenge. A brief scrutiny of work during the visit showed pupil progress and next steps for learning comments. Work is well planned and takes into account the mixed year groups in three quarters of the classes. Pupils make good progress and attainment monitoring indicates that at least 50% of pupils will exceed expected levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2. The school has just been awarded the RE Gold Quality Mark in recognition of its excellent, creative and innovative practice. Until last month, the HT had led RE very effectively; she has been replaced by an experienced colleague who had been shadowing the HT in her RE role.

Further areas for improvement should include:

- continuing to support the new RE lead teacher
- introducing a relationship and sex education programme (RSE) to ensure the government's requirement for RSE teaching is delivered in keeping with the teaching of the Catholic Church.

The diocesan reviewer wishes to thank members of staff for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded throughout the visit.

**Patricia O'Byrne on behalf of Northampton Diocese**