DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

URN 141629

Stella Maris Catholic Primary School

Parkfield Road

Folkestone

Kent CT19 5BY

Inspection date:	**23rd March 2023**
Chair of Governors:	**Susan Foster**
Executive Principal:	**Lisa Huotari**
Academy Principal:	**Andrew Langley**
Inspectors:	**Helen Frostick**
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EDUCATION COMMISSION
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Key for inspection grades			
Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Stella Maris Catholic Primary School is an Academy, in the Kent Schools' Catholic Partnership (KSCP), in the Dover Deanery within the Archdiocese of Southwark. The school serves the parish of Our Lady Help of Christians and St Aloysius, Folkestone, and St Joseph's Cheriton.

The school admits pupils age 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils on roll is currently 211, 103 (49%) of whom are Baptised Catholics. The average attainment on entry to the school is slightly below the national average. The intake is predominantly White British and Eastern European. The number overall of Special Educational Needs (SEND) support and Healthcare Care Plan (EHCP) pupils is 31 pupils (14.7%). Thirty-seven (17.5%) of the pupils have English as an additional language (EAL). The number of pupils who qualify for Pupil Premium funding (PPG) is 40 pupils (19%).

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

Stella Maris Catholic Primary School is an Outstanding school because:

- The school's Catholic mission is having a profound impact on staff and pupils alike by promoting a true understanding of what it means to be human and how to live a life centred in Christ.
- From a wide range of starting points, pupils achieve well, supported and loved in a nurturing environment with strong faith values at its core.
- The prayer life of the school is the heartbeat and the wide opportunities to develop spiritually, ethically and morally is fully embraced by the pupils. This is shaping them into caring and compassionate individuals, who understand that their purpose is 'to help to build God's Kingdom on earth through learning, playing and making friends together.'
- Leaders and governors are united in their unswerving vision for Catholic education which is fully supported by its overwhelmingly supportive parent body. One parent stated, 'we appreciate the opportunities our children are given to put their faith into action, such as fundraising and supporting the Ukraine appeal.'

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- To employ a range of teaching and learning strategies consistently in lessons to maximise opportunities to achieve the highest outcomes.
- To continue to maintain the highest expectations for the delivery of the curriculum through cross curricular and creative approaches.

Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.	1

Catholic Life	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.	1
The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.	1

Religious Education	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.	1
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.	1

Collective Worship	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.	1
The quality of provision for Collective Worship.	1
How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.	1

CATHOLIC LIFE

1

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

- The well-maintained school environment is alive with enticing and child focused displays to celebrate the glory of God.
- Pupils respond well to the Catholic ethos and mission and articulate their purpose well.
- The mission statement is child friendly and is understood and reflected on, leading to clear ethical and learning values.
- The Sunshine Team, a pupil chaplaincy group, positively contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school and have set up and maintained a food pantry, organised a candlelit service and supported the prayer life of their peers.
- The Gospel values of Love, Trust, Care, Share and Respect are embedded and lived out. Behaviour at Stella Maris is exemplary as a result and the pupils show their faith by the way they live both in school and beyond the school gates.
- Pastoral support is strong, and the pupils feel affirmed, loved and safe.
- Catholic social teaching at the school promotes and includes work on charities such as CAFOD and the pupils themselves take ownership of their fundraising enterprises with vigour and raise commendable funds.

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

- The Catholic life of the school is shaping the pupils into well-rounded individuals who understand their roles and responsibilities as members of a faith community.
- All staff are committed to the implementation of the mission and the loving care they show to the pupils is illustrated well by the joyful 'top ten' opportunities that the classes compile together at the start of the academic year, whereby class experiences are drawn up to enjoy. Examples include, 'roasting marshmallows and stroking a new animal'.
- Behaviour is exemplary and strong behaviour management strategies are instilling in the pupils, mutual respect and forgiveness, centred on Jesus as their role model.
- On the school website the Catholic Social Teaching tab clearly demonstrates the high priority the school places on moral and ethical teaching and learning.
- There are clear and accessible policies in place to ensure that the school is inclusive and compliant with the Bishop's directives.
- The recently produced staff handbook contains information to ensure that every member of staff's needs are catered for.

- Daily reflection has been built upon to the extent that it has an impact on pupils, staff, parents and governors alike. Well-being is important at this school with the children themselves requesting extra reflection time should the need arise.
- All staff at the school place positive and effective communication with parents highly on their agenda and on-site nurture provision and the Rainbows group offering grief and loss support are an important part of school life.
- The school is actively supportive of the pupils' preparations for First Holy Communion classes and the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the parish and is committed to a firm faith foundation for life for its pupils.

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

- The leadership team have a clear and well-articulated vision for the church's mission in education as applied to Stella Maris. They are responsive to Diocesan policies and are actively supportive. For example, the executive head led the reflection session at the diocesan conference this year and the exemplary 'Big Books', to capture key Religious Education (RE) learning moments have been shared across the deanery and beyond.
- The promotion of the Catholic life of the school has been enhanced by its focus on the school's website under the Catholic life tab. This is used as a vehicle for sharing this area of the school's dedicated work.
- Monitoring of the provision for Catholic life is reported on regularly to the governing body who get to witness it first hand as welcomed participants at times of celebration, Mass, Liturgy, prayer breakfasts and community events.
- The parish priest is regularly invited into school to lead Masses. The Mass for Mary on the field in the summer is a highlight for all.
- Parents are fully aware of the school's mission and welcome the comprehensive information presented to them both on the website and through the frequent newsletters.
- The newly appointed chair of governors and link governor for RE are highly ambitious for the Catholic life of the school and are actively involved in its promotion and evaluation. They are ready to challenge as well as support when necessary.
- The self-evaluation processes are coherent and reflective and Catholic life is given the highest priority.
- Improvements are thoroughly planned for and key partners and stakeholders are used well to enhance the provision. For example, the trust wide annual in-service training day offers the opportunity to renew commitment to Catholic life and keeps the school up-to-date with new initiatives.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is Outstanding.

- Almost all pupils are religiously articulate and engaged. They use their knowledge and understanding and skills in RE to deeply reflect on big questions.
- All of the pupils are committed to improving their learning and RE books are treated as sacred.
- The Big Books are testimony to how important RE lessons are at Stella Maris. These books have helped all pupils to gain a sense of achievement and enjoyment in their lessons.
- A whole school focus on developing reflective marking across the school has led to the pupils understanding and taking their next steps in learning with confidence.
- Almost all of the pupils are enthusiastic and 'love RE!' Pupil voice is very positive. The pupils particularly enjoy the creative cross curricular learning opportunities presented to them in the lessons.
- On the whole, the quality of the pupils' work in class, in displays and in written work is outstanding and pupils make at least good progress in each key stage.
- Behaviour for learning in RE is exemplary and as a result the pupils are rarely off task.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is Outstanding.

- The majority of teaching is never less than consistently good with much that is outstanding.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and range of well thought out teaching strategies inspires the pupils. The high expectations set by the teachers are met with enthusiasm by the pupils.
- The teachers ensure that the pupils have the opportunity to self-evaluate where possible, complementing a thorough approach to assessment. There is an established Foundation of Skills document to further support the teachers in their planning of lessons.
- Teachers use time effectively and the sequencing in lessons ensures progression. Their questioning is intuitive and responsive to the needs of the pupils.
- There is evidence of the pupils considering higher order thinking in RE and they frequently ask thought provoking questions themselves.
- High levels of feedback are interwoven as the lessons progress leading to the highest levels of understanding in the pupils.
- Achievements in RE are celebrated well and the 'green slips' whereby the staff note effort in lessons, are highly motivational.
- World faiths are taught comprehensively, enabling the pupils to have an awareness and understanding of diversity.

- The school is meeting the 10% requirement in teaching time with opportunities to teach RE going beyond the classroom too with homework challenges highly praised by the parents.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is Outstanding.

- Leaders and governors work tirelessly to ensure that the RE curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference, including Relationships and Sex Education (RSHE). The leadership team is already addressing the new Religious Education Directory (RED) in time for the September 2025 implementation.
- The Deanery partnership, set up by the two RE leaders, ensures the sharing of good practice across its five schools. The pupils have also benefited from opportunities to visit the other schools, important for confidence building and transition.
- At Stella Maris RE is at the core of the curriculum and professional development, resourcing, staffing and accommodation illustrate this well.
- Self-evaluation is rigorous and self-challenging. Leaders and governors are well abreast of strategic action in order to lead to outstanding outcomes. This robust work has led to outreach work in supporting other schools in various strategic planning and self-evaluation activities.
- The curriculum leaders are inspiring in their passion and love for RE and what it can bring to the lives of the pupils, in school, at home and in the community.
- The senior leadership team (SLT) ensures that the curriculum goes beyond published schemes in order that the lessons are enthusiastically received by the pupils.
- RE leaders ensure that staff are well trained. They work hard to monitor RE through planning, lesson observations and book monitoring, as well as listening to the pupils themselves.

1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is Outstanding.

- The prominent displays in and outside the classrooms help pupils to acquire an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts.
- The pupils play a key part in planning, preparing and leading school Masses, liturgies, class assemblies and reflections. The response of the pupils to their peers' leading liturgy is tangibly spiritually uplifting.
- Stella Maris is a prayerful school and the shared school prayer is known and responded to well by all pupils as are the more traditional prayers and graces. Spontaneous prayer was observed across many classes, including in collective worship.
- Pupils are keen to learn about the lives and beliefs of others and they have a profound respect for those of other faiths. They enjoy the world faith days held three times a year and the opportunity to hear from visitors who come into school as part of this learning.
- All pupils, irrespective of faith and ability, are affected spiritually and morally by being part of such an exemplary prayerful and faithful community.
- Daily reflections are impacting on the pupils' positive behaviour and the pupils respond well to the opportunity to lead them.
- The Gospel values are known and the pupils understand how living them out can help to shape their lives as well as the lives of others.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is Outstanding.

- Collective worship and prayer are central to the life of the school and praying together is celebratory and heart-warming at Stella Maris.
- There is a clear direction in the planning of collective worship which is designed to celebrate the liturgical year and complement the current learning in RE.
- The moral and ethical development of the pupils are focused on also, and the gospel, school values and mission statement all encourage the pupils to, 'help build His kingdom through learning, praying and making friends together.'
- Opportunities are given for parents to attend liturgical celebrations both at the school and in the parish helping to further foster home-school-parish links.
- World faiths are taught comprehensively, enabling the pupils to have an awareness and understanding of diversity.
- Worship through singing is at the heart of the provision for collective worship with the well-established choir also helping to raise the spiritual experience for all.
- The staff are rightly proud of the introduction and implementation of daily reflection and the staff's skills in helping the pupils deliver quality reflections themselves exemplifies their own deep understanding of the purpose of collective worship.

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is Outstanding.

- Leaders demonstrate expert knowledge in how to plan and deliver quality collective worship in keeping with the Church's liturgical year, seasons and feasts.
- Leaders are great role models of outstanding practice for staff and pupils alike. This goes beyond the school into outreach and continual professional development for other schools in the trust and diocese. A recent example is the leaders of Stella Maris helping to arrange a large community Mass at Aylesford Priory.
- Monitoring of the school's provision for collective worship has led to improvements, such as putting it into context so that it is topical and meaningful for the pupils.
- Self-evaluation is robust and is complemented by parent, staff and pupils' questionnaires.
- In-service training on liturgical formation has been carried out by school leaders and the parish priest to meet the needs of new staff.