

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Acts 2005 and 2011

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about this school

- St. Michael's is an average sized Catholic Primary School situated in Widnes serving the parish of St. Wilfrid's.
- There are 238 children on roll of whom 173 are baptised Catholic, 26 come from other Christian denominations and 39 are from another faith or religious tradition.
- There are 11 teachers of whom 11 teach Religious Education. Eight teachers are Catholic. Six teachers have a suitable qualification in Religious Education.
- Since the last inspection a new Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher and Religious Education subject leader have been appointed.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires Improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

Overall effectiveness:

St. Michael's Catholic Primary School is outstanding in providing Catholic Education.

Inspection Judgements

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

- Pupils are outstanding in the way in which they contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life at St. Michael's.
- There is a shared vision for Catholic Education which is embraced by the whole school community and reinforced in the school's Mission Statement "*In God's love we believe and achieve*". It is lived, loved and owned by everyone in this most inclusive school community.
- Pupils have an excellent sense of belonging to the school. Its values and ethos are visibly reflected in the exemplary attitudes and relationships between all members of the community. St. Michael's is an oasis of calm where everyone feels safe and is loved.
- The learning environment is vibrant and stimulating and enriches pupils' sensory experiences. A recent addition to coincide with the Year of Mercy is a 'Door of Faith' furnished with stained glass which is a focal point for the whole school community.
- Plans have been drawn up for a 'Garden of Reflection' to be created in the school grounds with the support of Faiths4Change. On completion it is hoped that this will become a focal point for the local community to use.
- Pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility by becoming school councillors, play leaders and liturgy group members.
- In the wider community pupils act as ambassadors of the school during off site visits i.e. on visiting church in support of parish events, residential visits and singing at the nursing home and supermarket in the local community.
- Pupils are actively involved in developing the Catholic character of the school by the work they undertake in fundraising for numerous charities e.g. CAFOD, Nugent Care, Children in Need and Sports Relief to name but a few and outreach in support of the local Halton Haven Hospice.
- Pupils benefit from participation in annual residential outdoor activities. Year 6 pupils visit London organised by National Student Travel, Year 5 pupils have an opportunity to visit Kingswood Activity Centre in Colomendy and Year 4 pupils visit Crosby Hall Education Trust.
- Pupils have an excellent sense of right and wrong and apply this in their personal relationships.
- Education for personal relationships has fostered positive attitudes in pupils. The school has recently reviewed their Relationships and Sex Education policy and resources. Governors have ratified the decision to use Journey In Love to support work in this area.
- Pupils benefit from an extremely caring and nurturing environment. The school employs both a learning mentor and child psychotherapist whose primary role is to support vulnerable pupils and their families in all aspects of school life.
- Pupils take an increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions and enthusiastically praise and celebrate each other's achievements at their weekly assemblies where a pupil from each class is awarded a 'Golden Tie' to wear for a week as an outward sign of their achievement.

- Pupils embrace opportunities to meet their potential in all aspects of school life. Pupils say that they are very proud of their school and are reflective and enquiring.
- Pupils are involved in service to the local Faith and religious communities by becoming altar servers, taking an active part in parish liturgies, undertaking choral events in the immediate neighbourhood served by the school and outreach in the wider community through collecting for the Widnes Foodbank.

How well pupils' achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education

- Pupils' achievement and enjoyment in Religious Education is good.
- The school has embraced the Come and See programme and the needs of all the pupils are being met. The range of activities provided is effective in engaging and enthusing pupils.
- Pupils' attainment in Religious Education is good. They make very good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities.
- There is no difference in performance between pupils of different gender.
- Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are good and their support is effective.
- Assessments undertaken to date and scrutiny of workbooks provides evidence of pupils generally attaining a good level for their age and stage of development and some pupils exceed expectations.
- Pupils are becoming increasingly more religiously literate as they become familiar with key words from the topics. Driver words from the Levels of Attainment are used in planning but not routinely in some lessons. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developing appropriate to their age or capacity.
- They are developing the skills that enable them to reflect spiritually, think ethically and theologically and are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.
- Pupils' engagement in and enjoyment of their learning is very good as shown by their interest and exemplary behaviour. This is a real strength of the school.
- On the day of Inspection one child in Reception spontaneously responded to the teacher's question about why things were better done together with *"In the St. Michael's family it's always fun!"*
- Pupils work extremely well independently, in pairs and collaboratively in small groups.

How well pupils' respond to and participate in Collective Worship

- Pupils are outstanding in responding to and participating in Collective Worship. They recognise prayer is a fundamental part of life at St. Michael's. One Year 6 child commented *"Collective Worship is our opportunity to give thanks to God and we enjoy that!"*
- Pupils regularly prepare and lead worship with confidence and enthusiasm in a variety of gatherings from their earliest years. They are extremely respectful and act with reverence.
- Pupils are becoming familiar with a variety of prayer styles and their knowledge of liturgy is increasing.
- The school has recently recruited and begun working with a liturgy team made up of pupils from across the school. This is in its infancy but the foundations of Worship are in place to develop this further.
- Pupils sing joyfully, reflect in silence and join in community prayers appropriately and with confidence.

The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education

- The quality of teaching and purposeful learning is outstanding in ensuring that pupils are interested, engaged and make excellent progress.
- Teacher's planning is effective in meeting the needs of the pupils.
- Teachers take into account pupils' prior learning when planning Religious Education lessons.
- Teachers deploy a range of teaching styles. On the day of inspection the vast majority of lessons observed were outstanding and those that were judged to be good had many outstanding features.
- There is lots of evidence of pupils being challenged and inspired which enriches their enjoyment of Religious Education. In Reception the children squealed with delight as their activities were revealed from a 'box of wonder'.
- Excellent use is made of time and resources e.g. interactive white board, Information Technology, God's and Church's Story, audio and visual media etc. iPads were observed being used by pupils in a lesson.
- The school is effective in deploying teaching assistants to enhance lessons for those children which require additional support.
- Pupils are very positively affirmed throughout their lessons and relationships are excellent. Marking is positive and informs pupils of their progress and in lots of books the next steps. Effort and achievement are celebrated.
- The school has built up a number of class portfolios of work; they are a real celebration of the work covered by the pupils in various topics.
- The school has implemented assessment strategies which provide information on the achievement of all pupils. The school has recognised the need to develop this further. Re-forging links with a nearby cluster of schools to share moderation and best practice will endeavour to support both the subject leader and the staff in accurately levelling pupils work.
- The tracking of pupils' work in Religious Education is in place and shows trends over time.

The extent to which the Religious Education Curriculum promotes pupils' learning

- The Religious Education curriculum is outstanding in promoting pupils' learning.
- The school using the Come and See programme recommended by the Archdiocese meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. Appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets National and Archdiocesan requirements.
- Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales.
- Planning ensures full coverage of the Religious Education programme.
- Termly newsletters are provided for parents and carers and there is a wealth of information on the school website to support Religious Education including photographs and the school boasts a twitter feed.
- The school implements new curriculum developments as appropriate and the programme is embedded securely across the school.
- Enrichment activities such as dance, singing, football, ICT, Spanish and drama have a positive impact on the curriculum.

- The Religious Education curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral development and vocation.
- Children have explored the beliefs and values of another religion - Sikhism. The children have benefitted from an outside visitor who shared information about the religion. This helps to promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently.
- The school uses Rainbows, a bereavement programme to support pupils who have suffered loss.
- The school offers wrap around care in the form of an extremely popular breakfast and after school club.

The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school.

- The Collective Worship provided by the school is good in reflecting the Catholic character of the school and takes into account the variety of backgrounds among pupils.
- Collective Worship has a high profile and is central to the prayer life of St. Michael's.
- Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the Spiritual needs of this worshipping community.
- Opportunities are provided to enable full, active and conscious participation of the whole school community. To enhance this further it is suggested that during acts of worship teachers ask rhetorical questions to promote pupils reflection and contemplation rather than a hands up approach. Archdiocesan In-service will further support teachers' delivery of Collective Worship.
- Pupils are enabled to pray formally and informally using a variety of prayer methods and styles.
- Opportunities are provided for parents and carers to participate in a variety of celebrations of the 'Come and See' programme.
- The parish priest is a regular visitor to the school and presides at both class and church celebrations of Mass throughout the Church's liturgical year.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders, governors and managers are outstanding in promoting and developing the Catholic life of the school.
- The aims and practical objectives derived from the Mission Statement, "*In God's love we believe and achieve.*" are currently under review to ensure that they direct and guide all aspects of school life. School leaders have recognised that this is an area for development.
- Excellent opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in the Catholic Life and Mission of the school through prayer, raising awareness of those in need and charitable outreach.
- The Self Evaluation Document provides evidence of the schools monitoring, analysis and self challenge. It is a comprehensive document which guides the school well in this area.
- The school provides very good training to enable staff to further understand the Church's Mission in Education and play their unique part in it including attendance at Archdiocesan subject leader Spirituality In-service days.
- A range of opportunities for Spiritual and Moral developments are provided for all staff and pupils including celebrations at Mass, Collective Worship and opportunities

to join in 'Come and See for Yourself' at the beginning and 'Rejoice' celebrations at the end of each new topic.

- Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all.
- Prayer, worship and the liturgical life of the school reflects and respects the religious diversity within the school.
- There are positive relationships at every level leading to a welcoming, happy, safe and caring learning environment for staff and pupils.
- Governors are very well informed about Catholic Life at St. Michael's and discharge their responsibilities in an appropriate manner.
- The school supports the St. Wilfred's family catechesis sessions. Two members of staff are catechists within the parish.
- The Wednesday Word is provided for families of pupils currently undergoing family catechesis for the Sacraments of Initiation.

How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Religious Education of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils.

- The way in which leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is good.
- The Self Evaluation Document is a coherent reflection of where the school is now.
- Teaching and learning is monitored regularly and appropriate feedback and support given as necessary.
- Continuing professional development opportunities are provided for all staff including attendance at Archdiocesan In-service Topic days and subject leader briefing days.
- Formal assessment tasks are undertaken in line with Archdiocesan guidance.
- The school tracks pupil progress in Religious Education and standards are good however, this needs to be shared more regularly with the governing body. The school has a link governor with responsibility for Religious Education. This role needs further development to ensure that analysis of data is shared back to the curriculum committee. This will provide a firm basis for accurate diagnosis of the schools' strengths and areas for development.
- Following a recent change in members of the governing body it is recommended that they undertake some in-house training from the Archdiocese to support their role.
- The subject leader is excellent in guiding Religious Education and Collective Worship. She is dedicated, enthusiastic and shows a real commitment to her role. Excellent documentation guides and directs all staff in the delivery of the subject and new initiatives are introduced when appropriate i.e. the planning template. She has led the implementation of Come and See and has updated all the subsequent documentation and policies in light of the changes.

What does the school needs to do to improve further?

- Raise the standards of attainment in Religious Education further by:
 - continuing to address the areas identified on the Self Evaluation Document.
- Further develop the work being done in assessment, monitoring and tracking of pupils progress by:
 - using the information gleaned through analysis of Assessment data to inform governors of the schools strengths and areas for development leading to improvements in outcomes and provision for individuals and groups of pupils.
- Improve the quality of provision for Collective Worship further by:
 - undertaking Archdiocesan In-service to support the delivery of Collective Worship.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education	1
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OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education	2
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1

PROVISION

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and how purposeful learning is in Religious Education	1
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	2

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders, governors and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders, governors and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
How well leaders, governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	2

Key to judgements: Grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 requires improvement and grade 4 inadequate