

St Michael Catholic Primary School

Feltham Hill Road, Ashford, TW15 2DG

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 20 September 2018



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- A good and varied curriculum is offered and there are resources available to enhance its delivery.
- The Religious Education Curriculum Directory forms the basis of the content of religious education and the study of other faiths is a strength.
- Most pupils make good progress in their knowledge of Catholic faith.
- Attainment is as good as in other core subjects.
- There is regular participation in moderation internally, at deanery level and at diocesan level.
- Overall the typicality of teaching is good and during this inspection some outstanding practice was observed.
- Homework contributes well to pupils' learning enabling them to consolidate work done in class.
- The subject leader has a clear vision for the development of religious education.
- All staff are well supported and teachers have benefited from continuous professional development.
- There are effective systems in place for monitoring teaching and there is evidence that this monitoring is impacting on improving practice.
- Governors are actively involved in the support of religious education and have been involved in the school's self-evaluation, which provides accurate areas for development.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- Pupils do not make outstanding progress in their subject knowledge.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- The school excels at being a community based on Catholic tradition and practice.
- It is evident to all who enter St Michael's school that Christ is at the centre through the status afforded to religious education, the resources provided and the quality of professional development for staff.
- Religious education receives at least 10% of the curriculum in each year group, as required by the Bishops' Conference.
- Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school.
- There are plenty of opportunities provided for pupils to plan and deliver worship across the school and 'liturgical leaders' from Year 6 provide support for the pupils in helping to prepare Mass and class worship.
- Pupils have a deep understanding of their responsibilities for others and articulately link scripture to explain their actions.
- Pupils are encouraged to live out the school values; this is evident in the excellent behaviour and relationships in this school.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of this school and value the dedication of leaders to promote catholic tradition and mission.
- The leadership – head, leadership team and governors- is the driving force in the school's commitment to the education of young people with a vision and discipleship for life.
- It is evident to all that religious education is at the heart of this school and pupils are provided with ample opportunities to take part in designing their own worship.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

Parental engagement in the religious education of pupils is now a strength. Parents are effectively engaged in religious education lessons, for instance in Early Years, parents came in to work with pupils in the outdoor area during a religious education lesson where pupils looked for mini-beasts in the environment to celebrate God's creation. Parents are involved with homework and speak highly of the use of 'Wednesday Word' and articulated how effectively this has impacted on home learning. One parent explained that 'homework in Year 4 provides opportunities to become involved and gain a deeper understanding of our faith.' Another explained how religious education homework discussion is 'a positive influence on family life'.

The content of classroom religious education is good

The Religious Education Curriculum Directory forms the basis of the content of religious education and the study of other faiths is a strength. The scheme of work is supplemented by other materials, but these materials do not yet deepen learning experiences sufficiently to impact on the pupils' outcomes. Creativity has been a focus and the vibrant displays and prayer spaces are evidence of this. The budget for religious education is in line with other core subjects and pupils benefit from using a wide range of resources to enhance their religious education curriculum.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupil achievement overall is good. Children get a great start in Nursery and Reception and the carefully planned for learning environment is a warm, friendly and caring place for children to begin their learning journey. The school tracking system shows that attainment over time has remained consistently strong. Based on replies to the parents' questionnaire, the parents strongly agree that their children are making good progress in religious education. Children's learning is assessed against the levels of attainment using the agreed understandings; however planned outcomes need to be more closely targeted to levels of attainment. The school has recently reviewed its assessment and feedback policy to ensure greater rigour and consistency of feedback to pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

Over time, teaching is consistently good, some examples of outstanding practice were observed in Early Years where pupils displayed effective behaviour for learning, listening attentively and engaging appropriately in a creative lesson about Jesus calling His disciples. In some classes, teacher input was too long, impacting on behaviour for learning. Where teachers had high expectations and displayed sound subject knowledge most pupils made good progress. In a Year 2 class observed, pupils were provided with a range of resources and worked collaboratively with enthusiasm, creating psalms based on their own experiences. In the Year 3 classes, the teachings of St Paul clearly linked to the pupils' everyday lives. During the lessons observed, most children remained focused. In a Year 6 lesson observed, pupils were provided with opportunities to discuss the parable of the lost son and engaged articulately and at depth when discussing unconditional love. Homework contributes well to pupils' learning enabling them to consolidate work done in class. There are assessment procedures in place and evidence of effective data tracking. It is clear that most pupils achieve well over time; however links between assessment and planning for outcomes linked to the agreed understandings are not strong enough to ensure good progress for all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are well supported, this is an inclusive school. Support staff use a wide variety of strategies to match pupils' learning needs. Subject knowledge is a strength and the theological support provided by the parish priest is effective and valued. The strength of relationships between staff and pupils is evident and there is an excellent rapport built within the

classroom. This offers students a safe environment, conducive to learning. Teachers are confident and display a strong subject knowledge, however the majority of lessons observed were teacher led and some opportunities for children to contribute deeply were missed. Evidence from pupils' books demonstrated that in many instances, pupils knew what they needed to do in order to improve. Homework books were evident in all classes and tasks were aimed to deepen or pre-expose children to new learning. A religious education help desk was used as a scaffold in one classroom and the students could confidently explain how the resources supplied would support them to achieve their learning objective.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is good

The religious education leader has a good understanding of how pupils are achieving in lessons. She has a clear vision for the development of religious education and has implemented the use of supplementary materials to improve pupil progress. Teachers have benefited from continuous professional development and teacher expectations are high; however this shared focus on teaching and learning is not yet impacting on pupil progress. There is some evidence that religious education is developmental but the content of the curriculum for religious education is not progressively challenging enough across the key stages. The school leadership has effective systems in place for monitoring teaching and there is evidence that monitoring is impacting on improving practice. The leadership, including the governing body work hard to establish systems to ensure quality religious education. There is an attractive library for religious education containing resources to enhance learning experiences for pupils. Staff are well supported with professional development opportunities and monitoring details evidence of challenge. Governors are actively involved in evaluating religious education and have effective systems in place to challenge and support.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- Ensure there is a consistency of approach to the delivery of the curriculum of religious education that is focused on outcomes to provide effective challenge for all pupils.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

Partnership with parents is a strength of this school. Parents attend liturgies and Masses and leave appreciative comments. Inspectors received 161 responses to the questionnaire distributed, almost all responses indicated that parents are very supportive and feel involved in the Catholic life of this school. St Michael's has developed partnerships with local Catholic schools and has strong links with a local Catholic high school. These links indicate a growing collaborative approach that based on sharing best practice.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum

is outstanding

Pupils at St Michael's experience a Catholic life that provides an excellent range of experiences. On entering the school building, it is evident that Christ is at the centre of this school community. The environment is vibrant and welcoming, displays are thought provoking and engaging. Religious education receives at least 10% of the curriculum in each year group. Governors and the parish priest offer outstanding support ensuring that religious education is well resourced and staff well supported in their professional development.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community

is outstanding

Catholic worship, prayer and liturgy permeate every aspect of life in St Michael Catholic Primary School. The traditions of Catholic faith are central to all that is explored. There are plenty of opportunities provided for pupils to plan and deliver worship across the school and liturgical leaders from Year 6 provide support for the pupils in preparing Mass and class worship. Pupils speak with pride about the peace garden and grotto. They value the opportunities for quiet reflection. Pupils feel safe and happy as part of this school community. There are close links with parishes and parents are encouraged to attend and participate in the prayer life of the school. In a Key Stage 2 assembly observed, pupils took a lead in explaining what is meant by the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Pupils did this with reverence and delivered a clear message centred on the recent Adoremus Eucharistic Congress held in Liverpool. Pupils also responded to scripture, respectfully delivering an assembly with confidence and clarity. In an act of worship observed in Year 4, pupils created a prayer space and lead liturgy in a manner that evidenced a deep understanding of reflective liturgical practice.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –

is outstanding

This school has an obvious dynamic and creative understanding of the call to human flourishing; pupils are articulate about the opportunities that they are provided with to celebrate their gifts and talents. The role of the 'liturgy leader' is highly valued and pupils respect the democratic process for election of these leaders. There is a deep understanding of the call to serve as demonstrated in pupils' work with Tanzania. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about their links with St Therese Lisieux Primary School in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania: they explained that their work together 'shows unity between the two schools.' Pupils explained how partnership projects have provided opportunities to explore issues such as poverty, health and hygiene. Pupils were able to quote scripture when discussing social justice, and understand why they raise money and support various Catholic charities. Pupils raised money to support Cafod, refugees, Catholic Children's Society, NSPCC; they also support the MANNA food bank. It is evident that not only do pupils actively engage in acts of

service, but they have an excellent understanding of the theology underpinning their actions. Pupils are aware of the importance of their school mission statement and assemblies each term focus on one theme from their mission statement of 'Excellence, Enrichment and Enjoyment'. Pupils are encouraged to live out these values; this is evident in the excellent behaviour and relationships in this school. St Michael's has developed its play offer through the Opal Play Project, whereby providing an enriching curriculum both inside and outside the classroom, pupils engage with an environment where every child has opportunities to develop their own talents and recognise the talents of others.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

is outstanding

The school demonstrates in an outstanding way its key relationships with St Michael's and St David's parishes. There are strong links between parents, parishes and school. Parents value this school and would highly recommend it to others. The school works closely with parents to develop its provision in response to local needs, an outstanding example of this is the new nursery provision from age two upwards. This is evidence of a collaborative approach benefiting the whole community. This nursery welcomes pupils into a community rooted in Christ and enables pupils to begin their faith journey from a very early age. Parents are wholly involved in this outstanding provision and engage with learning which in turn benefits outcomes for pupils. Parents recognise the dedication of leaders to develop pupils as ambassadors of Christ, equipped with the knowledge they need to go on to the next stage of their education. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the contribution this school makes to the development of pupils' faith. They appreciate the time the parish priest gives to the school. St Michael's has strong links with local Catholic schools through the 'Loose Collaboration' established in 2015. The Memorandum of Understanding, agreed by the governing bodies of all of these schools clearly states the commitment of the schools to the work for the Common Good of all the pupils and students in our local Catholic community. St Michael's works in a creative, vibrant way, teaching pupils to respect the world created by God. They have a strong grasp of stewardship and are proud of their Eco-Club.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school

is outstanding

This school is fully committed to Christ's mission in education. The leadership demonstrate this in a dynamic and consistent way; leadership is outstanding and enables pupils and staff to experience a richness of opportunities of a Catholic way of living. This is demonstrated by the impact of parental engagement on the faith development of pupils. The mission statement is understood by all and is regularly reflected upon by the school community. The full Mission Statement is displayed in the main hall and the 'strap line' 'Excellence, Enrichment, Enjoyment' is displayed in every classroom. Leaders accurately evaluate the strengths of the Catholic life and ensure the school is a vibrant and engaging place in which pupils can grow in their faith. The provision of the peace garden and grotto area is highly valued by pupils and staff and is effectively used offering a space to think and reflect. The subject leader, together with the head and governors relentlessly drive the school in its pursuit of excellence, they do this with an energy and enthusiasm that is evident to all who enter the building thereby ensuring that every visitor feels Christ's presence.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- To build on links with other schools and establish highly effective partnerships that promote Catholic life.

Information about this school

- The school is a 2-form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Ashford. The school also has a Catholic, maintained nursery.
- The school serves the parishes of St Michael Catholic Church, Ashford and St David Catholic Church, Stanwell.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics from practising families is 99%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 1 % and from other faiths is 0 %.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 81%.
- The percentage of teachers with a Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies qualification is 68%.
- 44 pupils (9%) have special educational needs or disabilities, 9 of whom have Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is (44%) This is above the national average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is 89 pupils (19%) This is above the national average.
- There is a below average rate of families claiming free school meals 16 pupils (4%)
- 32 pupils (7%) receive Pupil Premium.

Department for Education Number	936
Unique Reference Number	3915
Local Authority	Surrey

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4 -11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	455 (inc Nursery)
The appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Aquilina
Headteacher	Mr John Lane
Telephone number	01784 2533333
Website	www.st-michaels.surrey.sch.uk
Email address	info@st-michaels.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	May 2014
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Outstanding
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection 13 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 2 assemblies and 2 of acts of worship.
- Meetings were held with school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Ms Evelyn Ward	Lead Inspector
Mrs Geraldine Pears	Associate Inspector
Mrs Katie Buckley	Associate Inspector
Ms Tracey Peters	Associate Inspector

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