



St Michael's RC Primary School

Durham Road, Houghton-le-Spring, Tyne and Wear, DH5 8NF

School Unique Reference Number: **108849**

Inspection dates: 28 – 29 March 2019
Lead inspector: Martin Humble

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Religious Education:		Outstanding	1
Collective Worship:		Outstanding	1

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Michael's RC Primary School is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- St Michael's is a very warm, welcoming and vibrant school where everyone shares the headteacher's clear vision. The mission and ethos of Catholic education is at the heart of this faith community.
- The quality of Religious Education is outstanding. Overall, outstanding teaching and subject knowledge ensure that pupils make good progress over time. Pupils enjoy their learning and concentrate very well. Behaviour is exemplary.
- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding because the spiritual and personal development of pupils and staff underpins all that the school does. Pupils are actively involved in a range of activities which support the local and global community, contributing significantly to their moral, social and emotional development.
- The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding. Worship is central to the life of the school. Pupils, guided by skilled staff, demonstrate the skills necessary to deliver high quality acts of worship.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- The school is an average sized primary school and serves the parishes of St Michael's, Houghton-le-Spring and the former parish of St Mary's, Easington Lane.
- The school has a high percentage of baptised Catholic children and is oversubscribed.
- There are no pupils from other World Faiths.
- The proportion of children known to be eligible for Pupil Premium is lower than average.
- The proportion of children with special needs is lower than average.
- Almost all pupils come from a white British background.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- To develop assessment in Religious Education by:
 - adopting the use of the 'Age-Related Standards in Religious Education' in line with Diocesan guidelines.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF 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.
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers 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.

- Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the Catholic Life of the school and benefit greatly from it. Pupils have a deep sense of belonging to their 'school family' and parents comment that, 'St Michael's offers a warm and very welcoming environment for all children and their families'.
- Pupils fully appreciate, value and participate in the Catholic Life of the school with the mission statement central to the daily routines. The mission statement is viewed by all as a living document. The Catholic ethos is tangible throughout the school.
- Pupils evaluate and articulate very well their input into the Catholic Life of the school and the impact of their actions on their community on a regular basis. Pupils say they feel very valued and confidently express their ideas and feelings.
- Pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of the importance of how they live their lives and how they treat others. Pupils are happy, confident and secure in their own stage of spiritual growth, demonstrating exemplary behaviour towards adults and each another.
- Pupils are at the heart of school celebrations and, through very strong parish links, pupils worship with parishioners on a very regular basis in St Michael's Church.
- Pupils are able to extend their relationship with the local and global community particularly through their fundraising and charitable actions. During Lent the children organised a wide variety of fun fundraising activities with the proceeds supporting the Fountain of Hope School in Zambia and education for children in Vakighol.
- Pupils willingly and eagerly take on positions of responsibility and leadership within the school such as playground pals, school council, Mini Vinnies and an anti-bullying team.
- Pupils confidently talk about the various causes they support, effectively promoting the Catholic character of the school, such as LEpra, Missio and the Operation Christmas Child shoebox appeal.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The Catholic values of the school are given the highest priority and are embedded in the daily life of St Michael's. The mission statement is a vital part of school life in which all members of the community have played a part in shaping. This living statement is regularly reviewed to ensure it represents the current school community.
- Excellent relationships exist within the school community with all stakeholders fully committed to making the school the best that it can be. Staff, governors, parents and pupils are all encouraged to be involved in school life. Parents indicate that regular communication is a strength of the school.
- The school is a very prayerful community where all members of the community feel welcomed. Parents comment that, 'St Michael's offers a very warm welcome to all, and is very supportive to all'. There is a strong sense of family and parents take advantage of the many opportunities to worship and pray with their children.
- St Michael's is a school committed to Catholic tradition and ethos. The Catholic character of the school is evident in the creative displays and sacred spaces prominently featured around the school. The school chapel is well used by staff and pupils to support their spiritual growth and 'connect with God'.
- Clear policies and procedures are in place which are carefully planned to reflect the Catholic Life of the school for both pupils and staff. They provide high levels of support for pupils, staff and the wider community.
- Pupils are clearly supported throughout school by a range of pastoral opportunities provided by the school staff, parish deacon and caring adults. All staff play their part and everyone is valued for their contribution.
- There is an explicit commitment to the most vulnerable and needy with regular fundraising and collections.
- The Relationships and Sex Education programme is well established and delivered effectively at age appropriate levels following the Diocesan model, Journey in Love.

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

- Leaders and managers throughout the school are instrumental in ensuring that the Church's mission in education is lived and breathed by all connected with the school. They have a very clear understanding of the vision of Catholic education and role of the Catholic school in the mission of the church.
- Governors are active within the school community and fully participate in the Catholic Life of the school.
- Leaders are highly ambitious for all children. The acting headteacher, Religious Education coordinator and parish priest are excellent role models and are motivated and enthusiastic about the journey that the school is on.
- The school has developed very successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers, who have a clear understanding of the school's mission.
- The Catholic Life of the school is monitored by all stakeholders on a regular basis to inform priorities and evaluate success. Governors are confident in holding the leadership team to account, whilst being actively involved in supporting its mission. They have an excellent grasp of the challenges faced by the school and work very effectively with the acting headteacher.

- The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate, gathered from a range of sources. It has clear links to the school improvement plan and is focused on improvements for pupil outcomes.
- The spirituality of staff is a priority and opportunities for the spiritual development of all staff are provided through regular prayer opportunities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers 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.

- Pupils enjoy and understand the value of Religious Education, demonstrating passion and commitment in their learning. Behaviour in lessons is very good with pupils concentrating very well and displaying very positive attitudes to their learning.
- The high expectations of teachers ensure pupils make good progress across a range of skills and are developing well in their knowledge and understanding. They demonstrate excellent prior knowledge and are able to use this well in their new learning.
- Outcomes for pupils are very good overall. From average starting points, pupils in early years foundation stage (EYFS) make good progress and this continues through key stage 1. Good progress continues throughout key stage 2 and books evidence a very good standard of work.
- Inspection findings and evidence presented by the school shows no notable differences between groups of learners. Pupils identified as having special educational needs make good progress because of the quality of targeted support from skilled staff.
- Pupils speak about their lessons being creative and providing opportunities for them to 'understand God's teaching and how he wants us to live our lives'.
- Pupils fully understand where they are in their learning journey and what they need to do to improve. They are very keen to achieve their targets and know what they need to do to succeed.
- Pupils have great pride in their work which is evidenced in well-presented books. There is thoughtful dialogue with teachers ensuring interest and wonder is maintained.

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

- Teaching is very good with some examples of outstanding teaching. In lessons pupils are set challenging tasks which are well matched to their learning needs and which successfully engage all pupils. Teachers demonstrate high expectations of behaviour and engagement and as a result pupils concentrate well.
- In lessons tasks are very well matched to the learning objective to promote good learning. Activities are consistently matched to pupils' abilities to engage all groups of learners and to enable them to work independently.

- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and are a real strength of the school. Support staff are skilled and very enthusiastic and they are used very effectively to reinforce learning and to support and extend pupils of different abilities.
- Assessments are regular and the school has developed a rigorous tracking system. The levelling of pupils' work is consistently accurate as teachers are confident with levels of attainment in Religious Education. The school is in a good position to move forward with the forthcoming Age-Related Standards (3-19) in Religious Education.
- Teachers use Diocesan plans and guidance to deliver well planned activities through a range of teaching strategies which help pupils to develop and extend their knowledge and foster curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.
- Teachers make good use of time to maximise learning and develop a range of skills, interpreting signs and symbols, asking significant questions and engaging with religious ideas.
- High quality resources are used effectively to optimise learning for each pupil. The school use visits, such as to the Youth Ministry Village, to support the learning of all pupils in a variety of settings during their programmes of study.
- The standard of marking and feedback is very good. There are some excellent examples of focused marking. Written comments by teachers on steps to improve learning are being used consistently throughout the school. Pupils are given opportunities to respond to teacher comments which is contributing to enhanced learning.
- Regular moderation of work takes place in school and within the TRINITAS cluster of schools, ensuring judgements on pupil attainment are accurate.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding.

- The acting headteacher demonstrates and shares the vision for the school and for what every pupil and teacher can achieve. Parents commented that he inspires and supports the whole school community with his enthusiastic and engaging approach.
- Leaders use a range of monitoring activities to regularly check on the quality of teaching and, as a result, have a very accurate picture of the strengths and areas for development. Clear steps for development are detailed in the school improvement plan.
- The commitment and leadership of the acting headteacher, who is both knowledgeable and efficient, have had a significant impact on raising standards. Consequently, teaching and learning is at a consistently high level enabling all pupils to make good progress.
- All aspects of Religious Education are evaluated regularly and all staff are kept very well informed about the priorities in Religious Education. Leaders and managers use their findings very effectively to promote improvement.
- The Religious Education curriculum is rich and varied, providing a range of interesting activities and imaginative teaching to foster engagement and enable all pupils to make good progress in their learning. The Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- Sacramental preparation is delivered well and in accordance with Diocesan policy.

- Governors are regular visitors to the school and are routinely involved in a range of monitoring and evaluation activities. They are extremely supportive but also confident in their ability to challenge. They discharge their statutory and canonical duties well.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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

- St Michael's is a prayerful community. There is a calm and peaceful ethos which pervades the school and is reflected in the pupils' excellent behaviour and consideration for each other. They take opportunities to reflect, pray and meditate in the chapel and the recently created Our Lady Garden. Pupils' involvement in Collective Worship is a central part of their school experience.
- From the earliest age pupils act reverently when participating in acts of worship. Pupils are confident in planning and carrying out Collective Worship using a variety of styles and resources reflecting the liturgical year. They are able to talk knowledgeably about the variety of prayers and liturgies that take place.
- Pupils participate in voluntary prayer sessions such as the rosary club held in the chapel.
- Pupils recognise the special nature of liturgical symbols and show respect. They are aware that religious beliefs are important, demonstrating respect for their own faith and the faith of others.
- Adults provide excellent role models for pupils in their response and participation in liturgy and this is evident when pupils lead their own liturgies. The support of the parish priest and deacon is very effective in maintaining high quality worship opportunities across school.
- Pupils confirm that the meditation sessions are times they appreciate as it helps them reflect in a calm and quiet spiritual environment.
- Pupils enjoy using the chapel and the Our Lady Garden as a quiet space to pray and also a sacred place for them to develop their liturgies and Collective Worship.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- There is a clear policy for Collective Worship, it is carefully planned and resourced and is central to everyday life at St Michael's.
- There is a rich variety of different forms of worship evident throughout the school. In all areas of the school there are references to prayer and the chapel is a designated space for pupils to gather together for worship and personal prayer.
- The Our Lady Garden area is used to provide opportunities for a variety of spiritual experiences led by staff and pupils.

- There is a comprehensive timetable for Collective Worship. Parents, parishioners and governors are invited to share in various acts of Collective Worship and they regularly attend the weekly Masses or liturgies and other timetabled acts of worship.
- The school enhances worship opportunities by providing opportunities to use different locations as a focus for spiritual development such as a year 5 visit to the beach.
- The use of contemporary worship music further enhances provision as it is played to greet the children in the morning on a daily basis. Parents say that they find this, 'uplifting in the morning' as they drop off their children.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- The acting headteacher has set a very high standard for Collective Worship in school. He leads by example, drawing on personal experiences to ensure that pupils and staff develop a deepening appreciation of the church's traditions, seasons, rites and symbols and that prayerful, reflective opportunities contribute to the spiritual formation of pupils and staff.
- The governors have invested time and resources to support spiritual development across school. The school's parish priest is highly respected throughout the school and effectively leads and supports worship development.
- Leaders regularly review Collective Worship throughout the school. They seek the views of pupils and parents through the use of questionnaires and feedback after school events. Pupil, staff and parent responses are very affirming of their experiences and of the school.
- The acting headteacher and Religious Education coordinator are passionate that liturgical and spiritual development are priorities for all in school and that time is devoted to this. This is evident in the provision for staff and the variety of opportunities offered to pupils.
- The acting headteacher has a very visible presence in school and a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in Collective Worship, through both formal and informal monitoring. Effective evaluation of staff strengths has resulted in an effective continuing professional development programme for all staff.
- There is clear evidence of the quality of Collective Worship being monitored and evaluated. It is given a high priority by all leaders and active involvement by governors ensures they have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for further development in Collective Worship.

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 managers 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.

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The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

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How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.

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The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

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How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Michael's RC Primary School
Unique reference number	108849
Local authority	Sunderland
This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt Reverend Robert Byrne the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle under canon 806 of Canon Law. For voluntary aided schools it also fulfils the responsibility the governing body has to inspect the school under s48 of the Education Act 2005.	
Chair of governors	John Doyle
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Date of previous school inspection	May 2014
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