



## **SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT**

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the  
Archbishop of Southwark and Inspection of  
Denominational Education under Section 48  
of the Education Act 2005

**URN 118756**

**St Michael's Catholic Primary School  
Hills Terrace  
Chatham  
Kent  
ME4 6NF**

**Inspection date: 21<sup>st</sup> June 2016**

**Chair of Governors: Margaret McDowall  
Headteacher: Katharine Sexton  
Inspectors: Damian Fox  
Patrick Moloney**

### **EDUCATION COMMISSION**

**St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR  
Tel 01689 829331 Fax 01689 829255  
Director of Education: Dr Anne Bamford**

# **SECTION 48**

# Introduction

## Description of the school

St Michael's is a two form entry Catholic primary school. It is situated in the Chatham Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is in the Medway Local Authority. The school serves the Parish of St Michael's Church in Chatham. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 48.3%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is 10%.

The school takes pupils from Early Years to 11 years. There are 472 pupils on roll. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. 19% of pupils receive extra support. There are 109 pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium.

Date of previous inspection:

13<sup>th</sup> March 2012

Overall Grade:

3

## Key for inspection grades

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

St Michael's is a very good school with many outstanding features. The Governors know the strengths of the school and are realistic about areas for development. The priorities for further improvements in Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school have a high profile in the school development plan. Governors show that leaders and the Headteacher have a deep and sincere commitment to the Church's mission in education. Governors know how St Michael's can and will become an outstanding school.

The mission statement is both integral to and part of the daily life of the school. Pupils said that "it tells you how we should live our lives." It is a warm and welcoming school with a genuine ethos of care and joy. Pupils recognise the high level of care teachers give them. They feel safe and happy and know that teachers like to help them with their work and when they are unhappy. Pupils are aware of the "playground friends" who wear a yellow hat. These pupils are there to help friends who fall out.

Parents are overwhelmingly happy with the school and are confident that their children are cared for and well educated in the faith.

### **What steps need to be taken to improve further?**

Governors, Headteacher and staff should:

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning through sharing good practice across the school.
- Update the tracking and monitoring process to provide more focussed progress data for each pupil.

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

St Michael's has a spiritual and caring ethos which permeates the lives of staff and pupils. Throughout the school religious displays, a variety of icons and a prayer tree give a distinct Catholic identity. Pupils recognise this and are able to articulate their understanding of what it means to be in a Catholic school. They value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school. The 'Bible Club' and the Nursery prayer garden, give pupils an opportunity to pray and to develop an understanding of how scripture is central to the faith.

The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. They get along well with each other, regardless of nationality, faith and upbringing. They are proud of the school and themselves.

Pupils know and live by the 'C.I.R.C.L.E.' values (*care and concern; independence; resilience; church; learning; enjoyment*) which permeate the school. This was evident in a Year 6 lesson where pupils were able to demonstrate an understanding of the impact of these values on pupils' behaviour. They are happy to make a positive contribution to the school in their learning and behaviour. Relationships between members of the school community are very good. Pupils treat each other with high levels of respect.

Both pupils and parents recognised the value of the school as a Catholic school. The school has a visible presence in the parish community. Pupils lead a parish Mass once a week and participate in the Passion on Good Friday.

Awareness of the needs of others is evident in many fundraising activities. Throughout the year, pupils have raised money for CAFOD and Overseas Aid. They also contribute to the local food bank.

## **How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education**

Considering their very low starting points, the standards pupils achieve in Religious Education are good and are in line with other core subjects. Progress from Foundation Stage to Year 6 is never less than good and is sometimes outstanding. Pupils respond well to the variety of teaching styles. In the Early Years, Religious Education related activities and tasks are well scaffolded to support learning. Consequently, there are high levels of engagement and concentration in lessons. Consistently asking higher order questions stretches pupils' knowledge and understanding throughout the school.

Pupils are developing skills in evaluating their own work. The pupils appreciate the opportunities to discuss their likes and dislikes and changes that will support their learning. Pupils' written work is consistently of a high quality and shows the

great pride they have in learning and achieving. The school acknowledges that they need to sustain this improvement to ensure more consistent progress across the ability range.

### **How well pupils respond to and participate in Collective Worship**

Acts of Collective Worship engage all pupils' interests and inspire them in deep thought and heartfelt response. They participate with reverence. Pupils are keen to participate through reading and singing. The liturgical dance group gives pupils a wonderful opportunity to bring prayers to life for others. Pupils confirmed that they are involved in preparing assemblies and Masses. They enjoy assemblies and recognise that these are important parts of life in a Catholic school. In the school assembly the inspectors were very impressed with the high level of participation through drama, art and singing. On entering the hall pupils settled immediately to reflect on people who had been kind to them. Their engagement and enjoyment was sustained by the interaction between them and the Headteacher. Pupils value opportunities to offer their own prayers and intentions. The Chair of Governors said that often at Mass there are extra readings and offertory gifts so that more pupils can participate. The weekly Mass is prepared and led by each year group in turn, who are responsible for developing the theme of the Mass.

## **Leaders and Managers**

**Grade  
1**

### **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 deeply committed to the Church's mission in education. They are inspired by the school's primary purpose to provide a Catholic environment in which each pupil has an equal opportunity to experience God's love. The development plan demonstrates Governors' understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Their knowledge and understanding of excellence in a Catholic school is outstanding. They are humble enough to realise that progress never stops. Inspectors were impressed with the cohesion of leadership within the school. It is providing a solid foundation for further development. The Governors and the Senior Leadership Team are effective in ensuring the Catholic life of the school and its Catholic character is supported, maintained and developed.

In January 2015, Governors showed wisdom and insight in appointing a new Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team. They invested in creating an environment rich in Catholic identity. They are aware that this is an area for further development. The Parish Priest is the Governor for Religious Education. He monitors and evaluates the Catholic life of the school on a regular basis and, with the governing body, ensures that the school places a high priority in

developing all aspects of the Catholic life of the school. A parent had told him of the impact the Catholic life of the school had on their children “It is a school which is full of prayer and faith.”

The Headteacher is an excellent role model. Her faith and her commitment to the pupils and their families is evident to everybody. The school looks after families who are new to the country, for example by providing school uniforms. She has identified the need to continue to review the planning for sustaining improvements in the Catholic life of the school.

Staff and pupils have a very clear understanding of the mission of the school and its value for them. The Chair of Governors said, “We love our school. We want happy, fulfilled children.”

### **How well leaders, Governors and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement for improvement to outcomes for pupils**

Leaders, Governors and managers conduct a range of systematic monitoring activities relating to improving standards in Religious Education. There is a detailed programme of lesson observations and book reviews. There are regular assessments and the data is rigorously analysed to identify pupils who may need support, encouragement or a higher level challenge. The Religious Education Governor participates in monitoring, ensures that the governing body are informed and that school leaders are effective in their work.

The Headteacher and Governors ensure that Religious Education is central to the curriculum. Rigorous and effective monitoring and evaluation processes result in well targeted planning and strategic action. Assessments are moderated every term. Marking and progress in exercise books are compared to those in English.

The Religious Education Coordinator observes all teachers throughout the year and works jointly with new teachers and NQTs on training and modelling good practice. The Religious Education Coordinator has already begun to modify the existing tracking and assessment process to give clearer and more accessible progress data on each pupil.

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

All teaching that was observed was at least good. Pupils were well behaved and highly motivated in all lessons. They were comfortable and on task in both group work and individual learning. Pupils appreciate the way lessons help them think about making the right decision. Confident subject knowledge is applied consistently. Building on prior learning and differentiated learning activities result in a high level of pupil engagement in the lessons. Teachers know their pupils' capabilities and aim to develop these through excellent differentiation. Support and challenge is given as appropriate. Other adults in the room are involved in planning. As a result, they are effectively deployed to support pupils.

Marking and dialogue between teachers and pupils is of a high quality. Comments are affirmative and they help pupils to understand how to improve further. The teachers follow the school's marking policy.

The school should continue to develop strategies to challenge higher ability pupils, for example, setting independent tasks that they can attempt without initial help.

**The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum promotes pupils' learning**

The school follows "*The Way, the Truth and the Life*" programme. Religious Education is given 10% of curriculum time across the school. The curriculum is enriched through imaginative and stimulating activities and all pupils are able to access the curriculum. Delivering the curriculum through cross curricular strategies such as art, music and drama, is a strength of the school and enhances the provision of guidance for spiritual and moral development. The curriculum is enriched by the many displays and prayer tables throughout the school. Pupils have opportunities to offer their own prayers on the prayer tree. Religious Education areas for prayer are reflective and enhance the Catholic identity of the school.

Relationships in the school are excellent and reflect the school's level of care for the pupils. There is a great sense of harmony in the school. Staff and pupils are very welcoming and are always smiling.

## **The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school**

Collective Worship is an integral part of the school day. It gives pupils opportunities to develop an understanding of prayer and develop in them a desire to pray individually and together. There are assemblies every day and a weekly Mass in the parish community. The Parish Priest said that he was pleased with the high quality of Collective Worship. Preparation ensured meaningful acts of worship both in school and in the Church. The liturgical life follows the Church's seasons and is well planned and integral to the daily life of the school. The quality of Collective Worship is enhanced by the personal faith of school leaders and the various activities which give pupils opportunities to pray and to worship.

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