



St Michael's RC Primary School

Esh Village, Durham , DH7 9QY

School Unique Reference Number: **114252**

Inspection dates:	17 – 18 January 2019
Lead inspector:	Mary Frain

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Religious Education:		Good	2
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 warm and welcoming school where everyone shares the headteacher's clear vision. The mission statement, 'Finding Christ in each other,' radiates throughout the whole school community.
- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding because the well-being, spiritual and personal development of pupils and staff underpin all that the school does. Pupils enthusiastically and confidently embrace all of the many opportunities provided to contribute to the Catholic Life of the school and benefit greatly from them.
- Collective Worship is outstanding. Worship is central to the life of the school and the chapel at the heart of the school is treated with reverence and respect. Pupils, guided by expert staff, demonstrate the skills necessary to deliver high quality acts of worship.
- The quality of Religious Education is good. Since September 2017 standards have been rapidly improving. This is due to outstanding leadership of the subject. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and carefully planned and creative tasks are ensuring that pupils are making very good progress.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Michael's is a smaller than average village primary school.
- Pupils attend the school from a wide catchment and socio-economic area.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities is below the national average.
- 7% of pupils are from ethnic groups.
- The parishes of St Michael's Esh Laude and St Joseph's Langley Park are served by the school.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- To raise standards in Religious Education by:
 - continuing to embed the excellent systems of monitoring and moderation to ensure the rapid improvement in outcomes are maintained.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

1

- 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 from their time in reception, as part of a 'family group', through to year six. They appreciate the outstanding personal support and care shown by the staff and they are given a superb foundation of knowing who they are in Christ.
- Pupils embrace enthusiastically and confidently the opportunities the school offers them to become active members of the school community. The Mini Vinnies meet twice monthly and work in the school and community with card swaps, coffee mornings and food collections. The year six chaplaincy team take responsibility for setting up Mass, whole school Collective Worship and follow up on missions that pupils have been set. They are also working towards the Faith in Action Award.
- Pupil behaviour is exemplary and is modelled by adults and other pupils. Parents comment on how all situations are dealt with in a positive manner.
- All pupils are given opportunities to become actively involved in the parish and Diocese by making links with other schools, attending Mass in the school chapel regularly, attending diocesan events and through the first sacraments programme.

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

- The mission statement 'Finding Christ in each other' is lived out every day at St Michael's. Expectations are made explicitly clear by leaders, who encourage high aspirations and a strong commitment to the Catholic Life of the school. Parents and pupils new to the school are invited to a welcome liturgy, which is greatly appreciated.
- Staff pray together regularly and a staff retreat takes place annually in the summer term. Staff clearly value and appreciate these opportunities, which are inclusive, and allow staff to think and reflect. The school is very attentive to the pastoral needs of staff with well embedded initiatives to support them. A key member of the team is made available for staff to talk to each week.
- There is a strong sense of community at all levels which is evident in the high quality of relationships that exist between colleagues, students on placement, parents, governors and pupils. The school is a supportive and joyful community with all pupils part of a family group. Pupils take pride in their group and support each other in their achievements and in

expectations of behaviour.

- The school environment reflects its mission and identity. This is evident as you approach the school, with a prayer garden displaying the mission statement. The learning environment is calm, prayerful and structured with each individual at the heart of the vision.
- The behaviour policy is very clear and consistently applied. When pupils need support it is given in a spirit of forgiveness with personalised support for emotional needs.
- The entire curriculum reflects a commitment to Catholic social teaching. The eco-warriors are involved in various environmental projects, and the anti-bullying committee (ABCs) provide excellent support at break-times and lunchtimes for much younger pupils.
- Personal social and health education is taught very effectively, largely through family groups. The relationships and sex education programme has been through consultation with governors and parents and is being taught in the summer term of this year.

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

- The headteacher is a source of inspiration for the whole community. Her dedicated and determined approach has resulted in a coherent, clear vision being communicated to all. She is highly respected by staff, governors, parents, parishioners and pupils.
- The whole of the senior leadership team and in particular the Religious Education coordinator in partnership with the headteacher, are motivated to continuously develop the Catholic Life of the school. The development of the Catholic Life of the school is viewed by leaders and governors as a core leadership responsibility. This is reflected in the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- Professional development for staff occurs frequently and is highly effective. All staff are keen to actively shape and support the mission statement.
- The school has highly successful strategies for engaging with parents and parishioners. Social media is used very effectively and the half-termly chaplaincy newsletter has relevant information about Catholic Life, past and upcoming events and includes a section written by the parish priest.
- The governing body has a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding and is fully involved in the Catholic Life of the school. Each class has a named governor and governors are invited into the school each half term, which many of them look forward to attending.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

- 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 good.

- Most pupils, from their varied starting points make good progress in each key stage. Due to rigorous and effective systems for planning, assessing and for training staff, some of this progress is now rapid.
- The headteacher and the Religious Education coordinator have worked hard to ensure that assessment is now very accurate and attainment is now in line with diocesan averages at year two and year six, showing an improving trend. Pupil progress meetings held between the Religious Education coordinator and class teachers give clear actions on how to improve and narrow the gaps for targeted pupils. Results at year two and year six have been below diocesan averages in previous years and the school has carefully identified which pupils need to make more rapid progress.
- Behaviour for learning is good or outstanding for all classes and pupils show an enthusiasm towards Religious Education in lessons and understand its importance within their everyday lives. Most pupils concentrate well, have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Some pupils have access to personalised resources and equipment to help them to access their learning. As a result of these strategies, their progress is at least good.
- The big question and wonder walls are used effectively in each classroom to ensure that pupils are able to reflect spiritually, think ethically and theologically and are aware of the demands of religious commitment.

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

- Teachers are highly effective in consistently planning high quality lessons linked to pupils' current assessment as they know their pupils extremely well. They are skilled at consolidating and extending pupils' knowledge. As a result of this, the majority of teaching is outstanding and teaching is never less than consistently good.
- Teachers have confidence in their subject expertise. Due to a wide range of appropriate teaching strategies such as partner and group work and role play pupils are enthused and highly motivated to learn. Tasks are carefully differentiated to match pupil ability and tailored to individual needs where appropriate. This is resulting in good progress for all groups of pupils and rapid progress in some cases.
- Time is used very effectively to maximise learning opportunities and high quality resources,

including skilled teaching assistants, are used very effectively to optimise learning for each pupil.

- The school has very high expectations for pupils in all areas of the curriculum, and this rigour is very evident in Religious Education teaching and in the quality of work produced.
- Pupils are given regular opportunities to respond to feedback and are often given extra challenges. It is part of regular practice for photographs of work produced to be placed on the school's social media links, particularly when it is paired or group work. This creates a real sense of pride in the pupils, shares achievements with parents, and leads to high quality work.

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

- The school's self-evaluation is accurate, clear and informed by a rigorous monitoring cycle. There is a highly effective action plan, which is resulting in rapidly improving outcomes in Religious Education.
- Leadership of Religious Education is outstanding. The Religious Education coordinator has worked tirelessly and very effectively since taking up the role in September 2017 and this has resulted in improving outcomes. On taking up the role she quickly identified the need for professional development centred on planning, accurate assessment and understanding and using the driver words. She has skilfully delivered training and through careful monitoring and support, ensuring access for key staff to diocesan training, she has ensured sustained improvement.
- Staff new to the school are given thorough and specialist support which is ensuring that teaching is at least good and outcomes are good and improving.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have access to outstanding sacramental preparation. Diocesan guidelines are followed closely. It is fully embedded in the Religious Education curriculum.
- Governors give the same importance to outcomes in Religious Education as they do to English and Mathematics. A recent Religious Education governor day was attended by the majority of governors where they looked at standards, lessons, the work of the chaplaincy team and pupil led Collective Worship. The governors are therefore extremely knowledgeable about practice and standards in school. They offer outstanding support and challenge in all aspects of Religious Education.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

- 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.

- The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding. There is a genuine enthusiasm for Collective Worship reflected in the prayerful silence, the respect and the quality of responses to prayer and singing.
- Appropriate to their age, all pupils regularly plan and lead their own class Collective Worship linked to the liturgical cycle and current themes. Pupils are encouraged to give feedback and the chaplaincy team are visiting other classes to share ideas. Mini Vinnies and the chaplaincy team lead whole school worship at key times in the year. Pupils are able to use a variety of resources in their prayer linking scripture, liturgical music and other forms of reflection.
- Most pupils have a good understanding of the liturgical year appropriate to their age and ability. Pupils have regular opportunities to attend Mass in the school chapel which allows the pupils to develop an understanding of the difference between Mass and liturgies.
- The confidence of many pupils in planning, leading and participating in worship is very striking and commented on by visitors, parishioners, parents and governors. They are encouraged to pray in a range of ways and have many opportunities to write and share their own prayers.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Collective Worship is central to the life of the school. Prayer opportunities are built into the school day for both staff and pupils. Prayer could be through a liturgy, spontaneous prayer, a hymn or in the daily meditation that takes place after lunch. Prayer opportunities are well planned by the leadership to ensure that the liturgical year is reflected or current world events as appropriate.
- The Mini Vinnies take the opportunity at key points in the year to offer voluntary acts of worship such as stations of the cross during Lent and praying the rosary in May. These opportunities are responded to with enthusiasm.
- Families are invited to attend class stay and pray liturgies throughout the year. Parents find these liturgies very prayerful and reflective experiences to share with their child, as evidenced in the comments by parents and carers in the prayer life book.

- Each class has access to high quality resources to support class Collective Worship.
- Senior leaders model high quality and inspirational acts of Collective Worship to the benefit of staff and pupils. Professional development for leaders and staff is accessed when available and ideas are shared. This has meant that teachers are skilled in planning and delivering quality acts of worship.

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

- School leaders have expert knowledge of how to plan and deliver quality experiences of Collective Worship. They lead the school in a deepening appreciation of the Church's liturgical year in a way that is relevant to pupils in a contemporary context. As a result pupil response to this provision is outstanding.
- Quality time is devoted to liturgical and spiritual development for the senior leaders. Leaders also ensure that all staff in the school receive formation in the development of spiritual and liturgical understanding. Leaders are highly visible as leaders of Collective Worship and are models of outstanding practice.
- Governors and senior leaders regularly review provision and this review is part of the self-evaluation process.
- Leaders seek the views of parents and visitors. The responses show a deep appreciation of the work and a strong feeling of welcome and inclusivity.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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 managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**2**

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

2

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

1

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

1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**1**

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

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

1

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

1

SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Michael's RC Primary School
Unique reference number	114252
Local authority	Durham
This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt Reverend Séamus Cunningham 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	Mr Jonathan Yates
Head teacher	Mrs Joanne Bruton
Date of previous school inspection	June 2014
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