



St Michael's RC Primary School

Esh Laude, Esh Village, County Durham, DH7 9QY

School Unique Reference Number: **114252**

Inspection dates:	12 – 13 June 2014
Lead inspector:	Mrs Denise Kendall

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Collective Worship:		Outstanding	1
Religious Education:		Good	2

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

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

- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding because the school is a welcoming nurturing community where the mission statement 'Christ at the Centre' is truly lived by the school community each day. Pupils are proud of their school and take advantage of the many opportunities that are provided for them both within and beyond the school environment.
- The quality of Religious Education is good overall because of the extra resources that are used by the majority of teachers in addition to the core scheme; however there are some inconsistencies in the teaching and learning opportunities provided.
- The quality of prayer and Collective Worship is outstanding because pupils are reverent and respectful. They are keen to plan and lead both class prayers and Collective Worship and are able to contribute enthusiastically to a range and variety of prayer opportunities that are provided including meditation, thus ensuring that prayer is central to the life of the school.
- Marking and feedback does not always give the pupils sufficient guidance on how their work can be improved or provide targets for the next steps in their learning.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Michael's is a smaller than average village primary school.
- Children attend the school from a wide catchment and socio economic area.
- A below average number of pupils are in receipt of free school meals and pupil premium.
- An above average number of pupils have special educational needs and one pupil has a statement.
- The school has experienced some staff turbulence in recent years and currently there is an acting headteacher in post until September 2014.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Raise standards in Religious Education by:
 - Providing opportunities for all staff to access appropriate Diocesan training for Religious Education, in order to further develop the curriculum, to ensure the consistent use of appropriate tasks which provide differentiation by outcome and challenge for all pupils.
 - Ensuring that effective marking is consistent throughout the school and that it is sufficiently focused on pupil progress and achievement in Religious Education
 - Ensuring marking identifies clearly for pupils how to improve their work and their next steps in learning
 - Ensuring that resources from a wider range of sources are used consistently across the school to ensure that there is sufficient differentiation and challenge provided for all pupils.
 - Provide more opportunities for the moderation of work with schools using diocesan resources to ensure that differentiation by task and the use of challenging tasks is appropriate to the needs of all pupils.

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 are proud of their school and take advantage of the many opportunities that are provided for them both within and beyond the school environment. Pupils are proud of being part of groups such as reading buddies and lending their support to the Durham Food Bank.
- Pupils talk with pride about the activities they have been involved in through which they serve others – particularly the way in which they support the Peru Mission with a range of fundraising activities and how the choir visits local care homes and sings for the residents.
- The welcoming and caring ethos together with the support that is given to everyone enables the majority of pupils to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community. As a result of the opportunities that the school provides to support their personal growth and development, the pupils joyfully offer their gifts in the service of others. They are clear about the mission of the school – ‘Finding Christ in each other’ and know that this means they do their best to follow Jesus in the way they live each day.
- Pupils contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the school through the school council and pupil questionnaires which clearly identify that they are happy, feel supported and are valued as part of the school community.
- The behaviour of pupils is excellent. They care for and support each other naturally and clearly know and understand how important this is so that everyone in their school can feel safe and happy.

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

- It is clear as soon as you enter St Michael's that this is a Catholic school proud of its Catholic ethos and that it does all it can to support pupils in knowing and understanding the message of the Gospel in this Christ centred community. Displays throughout the school contribute to the stimulating learning environment which reflects the school's mission and Catholic character.
- Leaders and managers have high expectations and a shared vision with a clear focus on the school's Catholic mission and ethos. There is a strong sense of community and parents and parishioners clearly contribute to the Catholic Life of the school through their participation in prayer and worship and involvement in charitable fundraising activities.

- The school mission statement is clear with a simple children's version 'Finding Christ in each other' displayed throughout the school ensuring that it is an integral part of daily life.
- The school chaplain contributes to the work of the school through the many and varied prayer and worship opportunities that are provided for the school community.
- There is a clear commitment to the pastoral care of all pupils, particularly those most in need, resulting in a happy, caring community where witness to Jesus Christ is at the heart of the school. A range of programmes and opportunities are available for those in need including the 'Getting Along' programme for those experiencing friendship difficulties and the anti-bullying ABC group.
- Pupils have many opportunities to participate in a variety of activities including retreat days and visits to the Youth Village. These experiences have a positive effect on their personal development.

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

- The acting headteacher together with all leaders, managers and governors has a very clear understanding of Catholic education and of the role of the Catholic school in the mission of the church. Leaders at all levels act as Christian role models and the strong faith of the leaders is an inspiration to the school community.
- The governing body is visible and fully involved in the life of the school. School leaders and governors demonstrate an excellent understanding of the school's role in the mission of the Church and ensure that Catholic values and principles are given high priority.
- The acting headteacher and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the Catholic Life of the school very well through the use of effective questionnaires, talking to pupils and meetings with parents. Together with the staff they have the highest expectations for the promotion and continuing development of the Catholic Life of the school. The Catholic ethos underpins all aspects of school life.
- Governors are fully informed of the school's strengths and areas for development. This results in targeted planning and actions which ensure continuous improvement in all aspects of the Catholic Life of the school.
- Parents are fully supportive of the school and value the impact that the Catholic Life of the school has on their children.

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.

- From a young age pupils are deeply reverent and respectful during Collective Worship. They are reflective and focused during prayer.
- All pupils sing joyfully and with enthusiasm during Collective Worship and this contributes significantly to the prayerful experience of everyone.
- There is a range and variety of prayer opportunities provided including meditation, thus ensuring that prayer is central to the life of the school.
- Pupils take an active part in planning and leading Collective Worship from their earliest days in school. They speak highly of the different ways they pray in school.
- Pupils are able to outline the ways in which they plan, lead and contribute to whole school and class Collective Worship and prayer in their different class groups. Pupils show an excellent understanding of scripture passages, the importance of reflection and the choice of music and religious artefacts.
- Pupils are keen to write their own prayers and also to reflect and respond to prayer in their reflective journals.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Prayer is at the heart of the school community and is inclusive and reflective.
- Focal points are evident in each class with well thought out resources. These all contribute to the quality of prayer and provide good support and stimulus for reflection.
- From the beginning of their school life pupils are encouraged to lead prayer in their classroom and to have a special relationship with God through prayer. For example in the reception class, two or three children choose together the resources they will use for prayer, how they will pray and the special words they will say together.
- Opportunities for prayer and Collective Worship are very well planned and resourced. Some excellent examples of child led planning are evident throughout the school.
- Collective Worship has a significant impact on the spiritual and moral development of the pupils

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

- The headteacher and senior leaders have a clear vision for the further development of Collective Worship.
- Professional development in leading and supporting children in the planning of prayer and liturgy has been given high priority and as a result the confidence and reflectiveness of both adults and children is outstanding.
- The staff clearly demonstrate an understanding of the Liturgical year and ensure that there are many opportunities for pupils to share in this.
- Formal and informal strategies are in place to monitor many aspects of school life including Collective Worship and as a result the quality of Collective Worship continues to improve and enrich the school community.
- Sacramental preparation is delivered in accordance with Diocesan policy.

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.

- The majority of pupils enjoy their learning in Religious Education, particularly when teachers have taken the opportunity to ensure the use of a wide range of resources which challenge them to think about and apply their learning.
- Evidence from work scrutiny and lesson observations show that most pupil groups, including those with special educational needs, make good progress over time.
- Most pupils are given the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills in Religious Education and apply these to their everyday lives, for example in year four, pupils had been asked to reflect on the Resurrection and to write about what it meant for them and how the Resurrection of Jesus affected the way they lived their lives. However, the use of challenging and thought provoking activities is inconsistent throughout the school.
- Pupils take pride in their work and when the curriculum is adapted, using a range of schemes and resources, pupils are active in their learning and enthusiastic about it. However this practice is inconsistent throughout the school and teachers would benefit from professional development which would enable them to ensure that this approach is consistent in all classes.
- Due to the state of transition in level expectations across all diocesan schools, the current averages for attainment and progress are not reliable benchmarks. Therefore no judgement will be made in this report against diocesan averages for either attainment or progress.

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

- Teaching and assessment is good with evidence of outstanding features in some lessons. For example in year one the children were challenged to think about how stories they heard in the Bible helped them to think about how Jesus lived and how this related to their own lives.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good for the majority of teachers, particularly when they have used a range of resources to support their teaching. They have high expectations and assessment of prior learning is used well to support pupils moving on in their learning. However in a small number of lessons, teachers are not effectively using the wide range of resources available to ensure good progress is made by all pupils.
- When questioning is used effectively to assess understanding and progress, pupils

demonstrate good levels of engagement and positive attitudes to their learning. However this is inconsistent throughout the school, particularly when a limited number of resources are used to support teaching and learning.

- Pupils' work is always marked, however written feedback does not always provide sufficient guidance to help the pupils know how to move on in their learning in Religious Education.
- Joint moderation of work has taken place, however this moderated work has not been of the assessment tasks recommended by the diocese. As a consequence, moderation is not as effective as it could be in supporting teachers in assessing Religious Education using the Bishops' Levels of Attainment.

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

- Religious Education is given high priority by all leaders and managers. It is clear that this is a core subject within the school.
- Opportunities have been provided for staff to attend Diocesan training with a focus on developing prayer and worship. The focus now needs to be on further developing the Religious Education curriculum with all staff having the opportunity to access appropriate Diocesan training.
- The Religious Education curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.
- The sacramental preparation of pupils is recognised as both a parish and school responsibility. Catechists and teachers work together with the parish priest to ensure that pupils are well prepared for this part of their faith journey.
- Governors have a good knowledge of the school. They monitor the strengths and weaknesses of the school through regular visits, attendance at school functions, visits to the classroom to observe learning, looking at pupils' work and through governing body meetings.

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

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

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**2**

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

2

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

2

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

2

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 Diocese, (c.f. Code Canon Law, 804, 806), and for the Governing Body of the school (Education Act 2005, Section 48). The inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.	
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