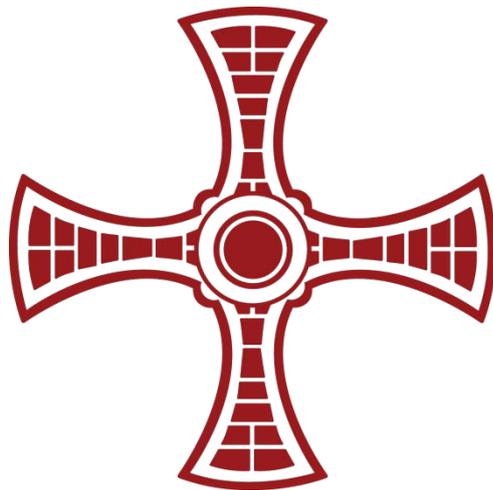


DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**
SPIRITUALITY, FORMATION & EDUCATION SERVICE



S48
Inspection Report

**St Michael's RC School Comprehensive School,
Billingham**

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT (Section 48)**

on

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE
SCHOOL AND RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION**

School:	St Michael's RC Comprehensive School
Address:	Beamish Road Billingham TS23 3DX
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Email address:	enquiries@stmichaelsrcschool.org.uk
School URN:	111757
Headteacher:	Mr Joe White
Chair of Governors:	Mr Mike Creedon
Lead Inspector:	Mr David Lewis
Team Inspector:	Mrs Pat Witte
Date of Inspection:	9 and 10 May 2012

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 reviews, evaluates and plans further improvements in the school's witness to the Catholic faith and Curriculum Religious Education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

The inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Michael's RC Comprehensive School is a smaller than average secondary school serving the communities of Billingham and Norton. Since 2003 it has been a specialist Science College and in April 2008 took on a second specialism of Applied Learning having been designated as a 'High Performing School'. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals have risen in recent years and is now just below the national average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are lower than average.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

Pupil Catchment:

Number of pupils on roll: 832

Planned Admission Number of Pupils: 165

Percentage of pupils baptised RC: 65%

Percentage of pupils from other Christian denominations: 30%

Percentage of pupils from other World Faiths: 1%

Percentage of pupils with no religious affiliation: 4%

Percentage of pupils from ethnic groups: 4%

Percentage of pupils with special educational needs: 17%

Staffing

Full time teachers: 47

Part time teachers: 5

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 50%

Religious Education Department Staffing:

Number of full time RE teachers: 5

Number of part time RE teachers: 0

Percentage of Catholic teachers: 100%

Percentage of teachers with CCRS: 40%

Percentage of learning time given to Religious Education:

Yr7: 10%

Yr 10: 10%

Yr8: 10%

Yr 11: 10%

Yr9: 10%

6th Form: N/A

Parishes served by the school:

St Joseph's, Norton

St Thomas of Canterbury, Billingham

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective the school is in providing Catholic education

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

MAIN FINDINGS

St Michael's provides a good Catholic education for its students and has some outstanding features. Students and staff are welcoming and courteous, and display a high regard for each other. The atmosphere is calm and purposeful. The presence of mutual respect is tangible and is a key feature of the school. Liturgies, assemblies and a real concern for the world community are evident with many thousands of pounds raised each year to support numerous charities including CAFOD and the Christmas Shoe Box Appeal. Pastoral care is highly effective in supporting the needs of pupils and staff, living out the school's mission. The school has successfully addressed the key recommendations of the previous inspection report and is set to accelerate progress.

Pupil outcomes are good overall and show a marked improvement since the last inspection. A new head of department was appointed in 2009 and has worked very effectively with energy and determination to drive up standards across both key stages. The school is confident of significant further improvements in the near future. New appointments to the department have played their part in improving pupils' outcomes and the team work under the highly effective leadership and management of the head of department. Effective tracking and intervention strategies have been established with regular and intensive monitoring of pupils' books and staff planning. The school could consider developing this effective model of good practice as a strategy to raise standards across the whole school, led by the head of Religious Education (RE).

The provision for Catholic Education is good. The head of department was appointed since the last inspection and has worked tirelessly to develop the provision for RE at St Michael's. The department is well supported by senior leaders and managers. Self-evaluation is honest and focused on improving the provision and outcomes in RE at the school. Lessons are well planned and stimulating, and pupils' enjoyment of RE is clearly evident. The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good and improving.

Leadership and management is good. The headteacher, staff, and governors are committed to developing the school's distinctive Catholic identity and supporting the RE department in becoming a beacon of excellence, leading school improvement. Since the last inspection, progress has been good. Therefore, the capacity to improve is good.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Strengthen provision for Religious Education by:
 - Continuing the drive to improve the standard of teaching and learning to ensure that the great majority of teaching is at least good.
 - Develop differentiation in order to meet the needs of groups and individuals, including the development of personalised programmes of learning for those who need them.
- Strengthen provision for Collective Worship by:
 - Developing Chaplaincy leadership of creative liturgical celebrations
 - Developing prayer in tutor time so that pupils become more skilled and equipped in leading prayer

PUPILS

How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups

2

Pupils are secure in and ready to express their beliefs and personal views which are used effectively by teachers to develop the learning in lessons. Pupils talk enthusiastically of their enjoyment and progress in RE, know their target grades and the steps to take to improve further. Pupils are aware of the importance of RE and are motivated and keen to achieve highly. Pupils' attitudes are highly positive towards the subject and they hold their teachers in high regard. The attainment of cohort groups is variable over time but the department is working hard to narrow the gender gap and ensure consistently good progress for all groups including the most able at key stage four (KS4). Outcomes for pupils across both key stages are good overall. Since the last inspection standards have risen at KS4 from 58% A*-C (2009) to 68.8% A*-C (2011), and A*-A grades have risen from 18% (2009) to 22% (2011). At key stage three (KS3) standards have risen from 82.2% (2009) to 95.2% L5/6 (2011). In lessons observed, the majority of teaching was good with none judged as inadequate. Pupils are keen to do well and apply themselves diligently in lessons. In good lessons the pace motivated the pupils, though satisfactory learning was characteristic of others with a much more limited pace.

Pupils speak highly of their commitment to the mission of the school. They value the quality of relationships and support given at every level. They are quick to offer praise of each other's success and achievements. Pupils participate in the Catholic life of the school including the retreat programme for each year group and the annual Lourdes Pilgrimage. They show interest in the religious life of others and understand the importance of key celebrations in school throughout the liturgical year. Every year group supports their individual charity as well as whole school projects. Pupils respond to the needs of others beyond the school and work enthusiastically to raise substantial funds to support projects such as CAFOD, the Christmas Shoe-Box Appeal, Zoe's Place in Middlesbrough and Daisy Chain in Norton.

Pupils display reverence and respect for each other's beliefs during acts of collective worship. They act appropriately during prayer and reflection and are aware of the liturgical calendar. Prayers and reflections are written by the pupils for community use in tutor time and assemblies. Pupils enjoy the opportunity as part of their tutor group to prepare the weekly voluntary lunch time Mass and spoke positively of the experience. The head of music facilitates singing in some assemblies and pupils participate well. Pupils recognise that the head of music plays a key role in the liturgical life of the school. Pupils have further opportunities for prayer and collective worship when taking part in the retreat programme where they have the opportunity to explore their own beliefs.

PROVISION

How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education

Overall teaching is good and no inadequate lessons were observed during the inspection. In the best lessons, an outstanding feature were the highly effective questioning styles used to build pupil understanding and engagement. As a result, pupils engaged in learning were keen to make progress and concentrated well. The use of resources has a positive impact on pupils' learning including the effective use of ICT to present well prepared materials. Regular and accurate assessment informs planning which generally meets the needs of pupils. Assessment procedures are developing in order to ensure that teaching meets the learning needs of all pupils, particularly the more able, although the school has correctly identified differentiation as an area for development in planning and delivery of teaching and learning. As it stands, it is not yet rigorous enough in challenging either the more able or those with special learning needs.

The school uses detailed and accurate information on pupils' achievement including Fischer Family Trust ('FFT Live') data to target underachievement and drive improvement. Regular assessment ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They know their target levels and current progress. A systematic approach towards assessment is used consistently across the department and has resulted in improved outcomes each year since the last inspection. The department has worked hard to identify and tackle underachievement. Tracking has become more embedded and the department has recently developed pupil grouping arrangements intended to stretch the most able. Progress under the leadership of the head of RE since the last inspection is good.

The RE curriculum is imaginative and well planned, leading to some particularly stimulating lessons. Since the last inspection the curriculum provision for RE has increased from 8%-10%. The change of examination unit in Y11 has ensured greater levels of accessibility for pupils, and weekly meetings between the head of department and each member of the team ensures rigorous monitoring of pupil work and progress. Good progress has been made across both key stages since the last inspection which reflects amongst other things, the quality of curriculum provision for RE.

There are planned opportunities for collective worship at the beginning of each day and these are linked to the liturgical calendar. The quality of collective worship is variable and the school has rightly identified prayer in tutor time as an area for development, so that pupils become more skilled and equipped in leading prayer. Assemblies provide greater opportunity for a variety of experience and different approaches to prayer. Staff lead prayer and reflections; often these have been written by the pupils, although the facilitation of pupil leadership of collective worship is not yet fully embedded. The chaplain is a valued member of staff who supports opportunities for collective worship in school and local parishes. Pupils speak enthusiastically of her involvement in the life of the school. chaplaincy provision, however, is not yet fully developed in the leading of creative and engaging liturgical celebrations.

LEADERS AND MANAGERS

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the school

The first priority on the school action plan and all departmental action plans is the Catholic life of the school, highlighting the highest priority to the development of the Catholic life of the school given by leaders and managers. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils' personal and spiritual development with a retreat programme for each year group, the annual Lourdes Pilgrimage and fund raising activities across the whole school and each year group which raise considerable sums of money demonstrating pupils' concern for the world community.

Since her appointment, the head of RE, supported by leaders and managers, has worked tirelessly to implement the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the provision for RE. New schemes of work have been developed and there is a rigorous approach to ensure marking is consistent across the department. This has led to increasingly positive outcomes at all key stages and has led to high levels of student enjoyment. Setting at Key Stage 4 has seen a big increase in the number of students attaining A*/A grades in their Year 10 exam module and the full effect of this will be seen in the results of summer 2012. The school website has been developed to include materials to support learning across both key stages including homework tasks and relevant audio-visual links. Pupils talk enthusiastically of the positive impact this has had in the classroom and across the school. One pupil remarked, "The new RE department are fantastic."

The governing body has made the development of the Catholic dimension of the school a key priority. They have been instrumental in driving improvements in RE and this has included a governor/staff training day in 2010. An outcome of this in-service training was the setting up of a working party to review and develop the Catholic dimension of the school. The governing body were involved in developing the school's mission statement and feel confident in acting as a critical friend to the headteacher, providing appropriate challenge at governors' meetings. At each full governing body meeting there is a standing agenda item on Catholic issues, and the governing body have an aspiration for the religious education department to be a model of good practice to lead school improvement.

Leaders and managers are extremely successful in developing partnerships with other providers and organisations promoting Catholic learning and pupil well-being effectively. International partnerships in Iceland and Brussels have given pupils opportunities for cultural and social development. This will be further enhanced through the forging of Olympic links and the school's hosting of 'Granada Day'. There are strong partnerships with local industry giving pupils insight into the world of work. Partnership with the local Catholic cluster ensures that students access a variety of courses and achieve well. Minority groups are targeted and given further opportunities to achieve. There are strong links with local parishes and the Diocesan Youth Ministry Team supporting the faith life of the school.

Leaders and managers have a shared vision for the inclusion of all pupils and their promotion of this is outstanding. Pupils feel safe in school and show respect and concern for all and are aware of and work to support those on the margins of society. There is an extensive network of organisations that link with the school ensuring that the needs of all students are met. The school works with parents as part of a 'families' project' to facilitate inclusion. The RE curriculum gives pupils insight into other faiths and engenders an attitude of tolerance and respect. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the common good and this work contributes to the strong community spirit.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1 **Outstanding** Grade 2 **Good** Grade 3 **Satisfactory** Grade 4 **Unsatisfactory**

Overall effectiveness	2
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	2
How good outcomes are for pupils, taking particular account of variations between different groups	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ the quality of pupils' learning and their progress 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ the quality of learning for pupils with particular learning needs and/or disabilities and their progress 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ pupils' attainment in Religious Education 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship 	2
How effective the provision is in promoting Catholic education	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the effectiveness of assessment and academic guidance in Religious Education 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent to which Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of collective worship provided by the school 	3
How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic life of the School	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan for improvement to outcomes for pupils 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory and canonical responsibilities met 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how well leaders and managers develop partnerships with other providers, organisations and services in order to promote Catholic learning and well-being 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion. 	1