



St Michael's Primary School

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

School Unique Reference Number: **108849**

Inspection dates: 08 – 09 May 2014

Lead inspector: Carolyn Duffy

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

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

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

- St Michael's is a welcoming and vibrant Catholic school where the vision of the headteacher, parish priest and governing body is evident. The mission and ethos of Catholic education is at the very centre of everything this school does.
- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding because all pupils and staff enthusiastically embrace the demands made upon them as members of a faith community. They deeply value the Catholic tradition of the school and its place in the parish community.
- The quality of Collective Worship is outstanding. Worship is central to the life of the school and pupils, guided by skilled staff, demonstrate the skills necessary to deliver high quality acts of worship.
- The quality of Religious Education is outstanding because pupils enjoy their learning and achieve excellent progress in their lessons as a result of very good teaching. The area for improvement since the last inspection has been addressed.

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 St Mary's, Easington Lane.
- The school has a high percentage of baptised Catholic children and is oversubscribed by Catholics.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for Pupil Premium is lower than average.
- Almost all pupils come from a white British background and there are no pupils of other faiths on roll at this time.
- The school has recruited 100% Catholic teachers of whom 67% have completed CCRS.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - Continuing to develop strategies and systems to ensure that pupils have a detailed understanding of what they need to do to improve their learning in Religious Education and are given the time they need to respond to advice in a systematic and planned way.
 - Sharing good practice of feedback and response opportunities to ensure consistency across classes and year groups.

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, describing a deep sense of belonging to their 'school family'.
- They wholeheartedly appreciate and participate in the Catholic Life of the school, living out the mission statement of 'striving to be a Catholic community modelled on the Holy Family of Nazareth in the hope of creating an environment that will enable all to develop their potential'.
- The Catholic ethos is tangible throughout the school with the head teacher, staff and Chair of governors talking about the Catholicity as 'being in the walls'.
- Pupils effectively evaluate their input into Catholic Life on a regular basis through 'pupil voice' opportunities. They feel valued and confidently express their ideas and feelings.
- Pupils are secure in their own stage of spiritual growth and demonstrate exemplary behaviour towards adults and each other.
- The Parish Priest is a regular visitor to the school. Children and staff speak with affection of his contribution to the school, how they have learned from him and what it means to be a good person.
- Pupils willingly and eagerly take on positions of responsibility and leadership within the school and the wider community, organising a varied assortment of fund raising opportunities to benefit others including the 'Thursday Fund', education of eight children in the Indian village of Vakighol, providing food for the children at Fountain of Hope School, Zambia and Christmas Shoebox appeal.

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

- It is very evident that the Catholic values of the school are given the highest priority and are embedded in the daily life of the school. Staff are excellent role models for the children and genuinely live out their roles as members of a faith community.
- The mission statement is at the heart of school life at St Michael's which all parts of the community have played a part in shaping.
- Excellent relationships exist within the wider parish and 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 participate fully in school life. Parents comment that the one thing they would want to change would be 'that children could stay at St Michaels from 3 years to 18 years' and that 'St Michael's has very good values that come through everything the school does'.

- The Relationships and Sex Education programme is well established and delivered effectively at age appropriate levels following the diocesan model.
- The behaviour of pupils in and around the school is exemplary: personal responsibility is encouraged through a culture of respect, praise, rewards and choices, whilst encouraging reconciliation.

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

- The headteacher, leadership team, priest and governors have a very clear understanding of the vision of Catholic education and role of the Catholic school in the mission of the Church. They are highly ambitious for all children and are excellent role models.
- The school has developed very successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers who feel that the Catholic ethos is strong and that 'St Michael's genuinely works in partnership to create a lovely, warm atmosphere where the Catholic faith can be fostered'.
- The Catholic Life of the school is monitored by all stakeholders to inform priorities and evaluate success. Governors are confident in holding the leadership team to account whilst supporting its mission. They have an excellent grasp of the challenges faced by the school and work very effectively with the headteacher.
- The school's self- evaluation is rigorous and accurate, gathered from a range of sources. It has clear links to the school development plan and is focused on improvements in pupil outcomes.
- High quality performance management systems, together with well-matched continuing professional development opportunities are provided. The spirituality of staff is a priority and there are opportunities for the spiritual development of all staff through daily prayer and annual retreats.

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 deeply prayerful community. Prayer and worship permeate the school day and are deeply embedded in the daily practice of the school. Pupils are engaged fully with worship and reflect deeply on the gospel. They are evidently respectful and enthusiastic in their response to collective worship; they speak clearly, use drama with feeling and sing joyously.
- The chapel is at the heart of the school and all classes use this special place for both formal and informal liturgies and prayer times. Dependent upon the age of the children, they are increasingly able to create an atmosphere for prayer and respect for Jesus' presence though silence, genuflection and personal reflection.
- Pupils are at the heart of regular and frequent school celebrations and enthusiastically participate in voluntary prayer sessions such as the Rosary. There are weekly liturgies for parents involving different class groups, weekly masses and class and year group liturgies.
- The headteacher, Parish Priest and staff are all excellent role models for the children and contribute significantly to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. Pupils show respect for other faiths and are very aware that religious beliefs are important. This is obvious in their preparation of liturgies and displays.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Collective worship is central to the life of the school and forms the heart of each day. Staff and children pray together and are confidently at ease with prayer in a variety of forms.
- Staff pray the universal prayer of the church before school weekly in the chapel with the Parish Priest and are excellent role models for the children through the way in which they give this the highest priority and show deep respect for this time.
- Collective worship is a strength of the school. This was evidenced from Reception to Y6 where children are skilfully supported by staff who increasingly place responsibility with the children to plan and lead worship of a very high quality.
- Staff and children are very knowledgeable about the Church's liturgical year and creatively plan themes for worship in line with these times.
- Resources for collective worship and prayer spaces are abundant and of very good quality. The children show skill and respect when using resources to support their liturgies.
- Parents and parishioners regularly take the opportunity to be present in Mass, assemblies, liturgies and acts of worship. They too are respectful and eager in their participation with the children and are good role models.

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

- The head teacher is an inspirational leader. He, together with the senior team, effuse dedication, commitment, passion and energy for Collective Worship. As a result, all staff are skilled in high quality liturgical experiences for children. Staff are extremely well supported through their induction for leading Collective Worship by the headteacher and RE Co-ordinator who ensure they have time to talk with experienced staff, observe the range and quality of worship and then shadow a more experienced staff member in preparation for their own work.
- Liturgical and spiritual formation is considered a priority for all staff. There is a clear policy and collective worship is monitored and evaluated frequently. All staff have a related performance management target.
- Pupils, parents and staff regularly provide feedback to the leadership team and governors about the quality and impact of collective worship. The leadership team are thoughtful in their response and consider how best to broaden children's experiences or develop staff skills. This is both systematic and rigorous.
- The recruitment of staff is a key strategy in ensuring that collective worship remains of the highest quality and both the headteacher and governors seek to recruit committed, knowledgeable staff who will continue the high quality provision which is embedded within the school.

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.

- The quality of learning and progress is outstanding. All pupils enjoy their learning, speak with passion, have very positive attitudes and work at a swift pace throughout lessons. They apply themselves with enthusiasm to the challenges set by the teacher.
- Pupils start school in Reception with skills typically in line with their age and make very good progress as a result of their needs being well met. They continue to make outstanding progress throughout KS1 and KS2 as a result of very good teaching. Children are proud of their work, are religiously literate, articulate and reflective.
- Groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Teachers are adept at differentiating work and providing additional adult support.
- Pupils' skill development is very good with a wide range of examples in books. Samples included evidence of children being able to interpret sources accurately, to reflect and evaluate and to pose questions which were then investigated.
- Due to the state of transition in level expectation 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 outstanding.

- Teaching and assessment is outstanding and as a result all pupils are making rapid and sustained progress. Teachers plan lessons very well. As a result of accurate assessment they differentiate their lessons and are highly effective in meeting the needs of all pupils including those who have special educational needs.
- Teachers have very high expectations of work and behaviour which are communicated effectively to pupils. They are also knowledgeable and confident in their teaching and use a range of appropriate resources creatively ensuring that children are highly engaged and motivated in their learning.
- The thorough checking of pupils' understanding throughout the lesson to identify misconceptions, challenge thinking or provide feedback results in pupils being actively engaged throughout the lesson maximising learning. Achievement is regularly celebrated in lessons.
- Marking and assessment is of a consistently high quality but not enough pupils know how

well they have done. Work is moderated in school and within the diocese. There is a rigorous tracking system which informs planning and ensures that pupils are continually challenged.

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

- The headteacher and two assistant headteachers (which include the RE Coordinator) provide strong and highly effective leadership. They share the same vision and are deeply committed to ensuring that Religious Education is of the highest quality resulting in pupils achieving well.
- Self-evaluation is outstanding because the RE coordinator, ably supported by the headteacher, uses a range of strategies effectively to rigorously monitor and accurately evaluate the provision and outcomes in RE. The staff team continually scrutinise their practice. The evaluation of this monitoring provides a well-targeted, strategic plan for improvement which results in continual improvements in outcomes. Governors are involved at all stages.
- The Governing Body discharge their statutory and canonical duties well. The Chair of Governors, together with the whole governing body, is well informed and knowledgeable about the school. Governors are regularly in school and provide appropriate challenge to the headteacher and leadership team.
- Religious Education meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference, is extremely well resourced and is evident in school with a wide range of high quality resources available for pupils and staff.
- Sacramental preparation is outstanding, is given a high priority by the school, is of a very high quality and is in line with diocesan policy.

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.

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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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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:**1**

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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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:**1**

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

1

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

1

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

1

SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	St Michael's Primary School
Unique reference number	108849
Local authority	Sunderland
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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