

Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for St Michael And All Angels Catholic Primary School, Birkenhead

URN: 105090

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Mark Davies, Bishop of Shrewsbury on:

Date: 22-23 June 2023

Overall effectiveness The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....	1
Catholic life and mission (p.3) How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.....	1
Religious education (p.5) The quality of curriculum religious education.....	1
Collective worship (p.7) The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....	1
The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference	✓
The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop	✓
The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- All involved with the school fully embrace its Catholic life and mission. All stakeholders are involved in the evaluation of this and therefore they have ownership.
- St Michael and All Angels truly lives out its mission, led by the inspirational witness of the head teacher, together with the commitment of the senior leadership team, all staff, and governors.
- Christ is at the centre of all that is done in the school; prayer life is an integral part of this and is evident in the relationships between all members of the school community and the close links with the parish, as well as in the exemplary behaviour of pupils.

- The dedication and skill of the passionate subject leader, senior leaders and staff ensure that religious education is a strength of the school.
- Pastoral care is outstanding. Parents deeply appreciate the nurturing environment at St Michael and All Angels, and value the support and understanding for their children and their families.

What the school needs to improve:

- As identified in the school improvement plan, continue to work with pupils on reflection and self-evaluation in prayer and liturgy and religious education, and act on ideas for improvement.
- Enrich pupils' experience of prayer & liturgy considering ways to provide outdoor prayer spaces.

Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

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

1

Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

1



Pupils at St Michael and All Angels clearly articulate their understanding of their school's distinctive Catholic identity. They embrace it and are active participants in developing and enhancing the Catholic life and mission. Pupils know that they are loved, safe, valued, and cared for. They talk about 'following in the footsteps of Jesus' and how this means respecting others, including those of other faiths or those with different needs. A shining example of this is the way in which pupils from the Little Angels base are welcomed and join in learning and activities with other classes. Pupils are justly proud of being a School of Sanctuary and their individual prayers during Refugee Week show compassion and empathy. The eco-warriors, contributing to the local foodbank and fundraising for local and global charities, are examples of the pupils' proactive response to the demands of Catholic Social Teaching, *Laudato Si* and Pope Francis' call to action for our common home. Pupils explain how they not only learn the school values, one each month, but live them out in their daily lives, and talk about the values with their families at home. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and all pupils flourish in St Michael and All Angels school.

All staff enthusiastically embrace the mission of the school, 'Love others as Jesus loves you'. This is reviewed annually and is witnessed throughout the school community. As a result, relationships at every level are strong and supportive, with a palpable culture of welcome. St Michael and All Angels is a truly inclusive school. Pastoral care is outstanding, and staff are exemplary role models. Staff feel 'everyone lives and breathes Catholic values'. Parents speak movingly of their high regard for the school and the staff, citing many instances of how staff constantly care for and support pupils, parents and carers, and families. The Pop-Up Pantry is

an example of how the school witnesses to its Catholic life and mission. The school is extremely fortunate in having a number of dedicated clergy, who collaborate with the staff to plan creative activities such as residential retreats, which provide high quality opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of pupils and staff. Relationships and sex education, and personal, social and health education are carefully planned in detail by the enthusiastic subject leader, and meet statutory and diocesan requirements, clearly reflecting the teaching of the Church.

Leaders and governors view the school's Catholic life and mission as a core leadership responsibility, putting Christ at the centre of all the school does. The whole community is inspired by this and has the highest regard for the school and all it does. Staff willingly share how well they are supported by the school's leadership and other staff, especially during challenging times. Induction of new staff is a strength. Leaders and governors fully engage with diocesan policies and initiatives. Subject leaders plan the whole curriculum, identifying connections between different subject areas, ensuring Catholic Social Teaching is central, and supports pupils' understanding of the Church's vision. There is an excellent relationship between the school and the parish. Leaders and governors, with the parish priest and two deacons, commit to ensuring Catholic life and mission is planned, supported, and developed throughout the year. They also seek new ways to develop the strong partnership with parents and carers. Governors are ambitious for the Catholic life and mission of the school and ensure it is given priority when planning for school improvement. Leaders and governors involve all stakeholders in the evaluation of the school's Catholic life and mission and, therefore, all have ownership of this.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....	1
Pupil outcomes How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....	1
Provision The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....	1
Leadership How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....	1

Pupils enjoy their lessons in religious education, achieve well and make good progress across all ages and groups, regardless of their starting points. Progress is in line with other core subjects. In lessons, behaviour is exemplary; all pupils stay on task and, as there is no disruption, they learn quickly and make progress. Independence, engagement, and concentration in lessons is evident, resulting in high standards in pupils' written and creative work. The school's focus on oracy provides pupils with the skills to express their thoughts and views, and to ask questions. This helps them to learn more and remember more. Pupils understand and respond well to marking and feedback. Responses to challenging questions from their teachers, in lessons and in their books, show that pupils, relative to their age and ability, think deeply about their learning and reflect spiritually. This is evident across the school and pupils say they value the opportunities they are offered for prayer and reflection in lessons. After one such time a younger pupil commented, 'The Holy Spirit makes us strong and brave.' They are religiously literate and understand that what they learn in religious education lessons affects and guides their everyday lives.

Teachers' high expectations in religious education are clearly evident in lessons and in pupils' work. Staff display in-depth knowledge and expertise, including creative ways of questioning, which engage pupils in their learning. In lessons, recall of prior learning, and adaptive teaching, based on assessment of pupils' needs and understanding, means that all pupils learn extremely well. Through questioning and marking, pupils are challenged to think more deeply. Pupils' efforts are recognised and shared with parents. For example, on Wow Wednesdays, staff message or telephone parents to let them know of their child's efforts and success. The Catholic faith is at the heart of teaching in religious education. Staff value religious education

highly and have a deep understanding of how it impacts on pupils' moral and spiritual development. For instance, topics are linked to Catholic Social Teaching and pupils are given opportunities to reflect on the Scripture studied, on what they have learnt, and on how this affects how they live their daily lives. Careful planning offers opportunities for pupils to discuss, debate, and work creatively and these are evident in pupils' work. High quality resources including other adults, support pupils very effectively. However, more time for pupils' self-evaluation would enhance this further.

Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum follows the requirements laid down in the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Religious education is given the highest priority, shown by professional development for staff, resourcing and timetabling, and parity with the core curriculum. Well-planned coaching and mentoring by the extremely knowledgeable and skilled subject leader and other senior leaders enable staff to increase their subject knowledge and skills, which result in teaching that is consistently good and some that is outstanding. Governors have high expectations and ensure that religious education is regularly monitored and evaluated. Pupils and the subject leader report to the curriculum committee and answer challenging questions on what has been taught and learnt. The subject leader is passionate about her subject and, supported by the senior leadership team, ensures that religious education at St Michael and All Angels school is held in high regard by the staff, clergy, and parents. The subject leader's forensic analysis of pupils' work and teachers' marking, shows the level of challenge, and pupil progress. This enables judgements to be made about pupils' understanding and knowledge. Areas for development are identified and acted upon quickly, ensuring prior learning is built on and enhanced.

Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

1

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

1

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

1

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship

1

Pupils at St Michael and All Angels school actively participate in a variety of forms of prayer and liturgy. Older pupils regularly plan and lead prayer and liturgical prayer for their class and key stage, and sometimes support, younger pupils to plan and lead prayer and liturgy. During times of prayer, pupils listen attentively, reflect in silence, and join in singing. They understand and use a variety of ways of praying, including traditional prayers and responses, and offer their own thoughtful prayers, both written and spoken. Pupils are keen to support the local foodbank after spending time listening to the word of God and reflecting on those in need. According to their age and development, pupils have an excellent understanding of the Church's liturgical year and discuss ways in which different seasons and feasts are celebrated. Following a visit to the church, pupils recall what they have seen, recognise artefacts and place them in their class model of the church. A letter from a parishioner praises pupils for their excellent behaviour, singing and responses during a Mass in church. To enrich their experience of prayer and liturgy, pupils now need support in ways of evaluating what they have done.

Prayer and liturgy are an intrinsic part of the pattern of daily life at St Michael and All Angels and many activities begin with prayer. Throughout the liturgical year, pupils experience the richness of Catholic tradition. Scripture passages are used effectively with all age groups and teachers ensure that links are made to the impact of this on daily life. Staff are fully committed to providing meaningful and creative experiences, and in supporting pupils to do the same. Staff use their skill and creativity, such as art and music, to enhance prayer experiences. A travelling rosary, travelling crib, and prayer trails provide additional, thoughtful prayer experiences for pupils and their families. Parents and carers appreciate these and say they are 'always invited to everything' in school and church, to share prayer and liturgy with their

children. The school, clergy, and parish work hard together to help pupils participate in the liturgy. Monday whole-school assemblies are based on the previous Sunday's readings and the Gospel message is carried through the whole week. Within school, prayer spaces are very well resourced and are used well. Providing and using outdoor prayer spaces would enrich pupils' experience of prayer and liturgy.

The school's policy for prayer and liturgy provides guidance and support for staff, including a clear progression of skills for pupils. As a result, prayer and liturgy is consistent across the school. Leaders and governors, together with the parish priest and two deacons, plan the whole school year, so that significant dates and sacraments are celebrated with appropriate liturgies and Masses. This is a strength of the school. In addition, leaders, and governors, with excellent support from the clergy, model and coach staff in leading prayer and liturgy. As a result of this, staff feel confident in their planning and delivery and ask for help when necessary. Prayer and liturgy are given a high priority in the life of the school. High quality resources, including artefacts, visitors such as Cafod, Caritas, and Shrewsbury diocesan youth team, retreats, and retreat days, provide excellent support for prayer and liturgy. Governors speak of their strong commitment to the spiritual development of staff and pupils. The parish priest expressed his total confidence in the school's response to this. The inspirational head teacher, along with the team of committed and ambitious governors, clergy, and staff, ensure that prayer and liturgy energise and support the whole school community.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Michael and All Angels Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	105090
Full postal address of the school	New Hey Road Birkenhead CH49 5LE
School phone number	0151 677 4088
Name of head teacher or principal	Mrs S Ralph
Chair of governing board	Revd Patrick Regan
School Website	http://www.smaaawirral.com
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age-range of pupils	2-11
Trustees	Diocese of Shrewsbury
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	09 March 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

The inspection team

Carol Morgan	Lead inspector
Susan Lyonette	Team inspector

Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement