



Archdiocese of Birmingham

Section 48 Inspection

ST MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Part of the Bishop Cleary Multi-Academy Company

Telford Gardens, Wolverhampton, WV3 7LE

Inspection date 28th & 29th November 2016

Reporting Inspector Mrs Alexandra Beardmore
Assistant Inspector Mrs Anne Marie Cheadle

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Academy
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	222
Appropriate authority	Board of Directors
Chair of Governors	Ms Catherine Arthurs
Telephone number	01902 556368
E-mail address	office@stmichaels-academy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	September 2011
DFE School Number	336 3307
Unique Reference Number	139892
Headteacher	Mrs Stacy McHale
Previous inspection:	Good
This inspection:	Good

Evidence

- The inspection was carried out by two Diocesan Inspectors.
- The focus of the inspection was on the quality, leadership, and impact of the school's provision of Catholic life, collective worship, and religious education (RE).
- The inspectors observed teaching across 5 RE lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Some of these lessons were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors completed a work scrutiny and held discussions with pupils to evaluate their understanding of Catholic life, worship, and the impact of teaching on their learning over time.
- Meetings were held with the chair of directors, other directors, chair of the academy committee and other members of the committees, the headteacher, the subject leader and the parish priest.
- The inspectors attended a whole school collective worship and liturgy and undertook a learning walk to look at aspects of learning and teaching in RE, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, data about pupils' achievement and progress, RAISE online, the development plan, teachers' planning, and learning journals.

Information about the school

- St Michael's is an average sized primary school serving the parish of St Michael's in Wolverhampton and also drawing pupils from a wider geographical area.
- The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has grown significantly and is in line with the national average.
- The number of Catholic pupils is currently 57%.
- The number of pupils classed as disadvantaged is in line with the national average.
- The number of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is in line with the national average.
- Attainment on entry is low.
- Since the last inspection the school has become part of a multi-academy company (MAC), there have been staff changes at all levels including a new principal and vice principal, who is also the RE subject leader.

Main Findings

- The principal and RE leader drive improvements and place the Catholic life of the school at the centre of all it does. Consequently, the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.
- Through accurate self-evaluation processes the school knows its strengths and weaknesses well.
- Pupils show an excellent understanding of their faith, living out their Catholic mission, values and virtues every day.
- The children respond to and are actively involved in collective worship. They are reverent and respectful, and talk about collective worship positively.
- The provision, leadership and outcomes in RE are all good. As a result, the children enjoy their RE lessons and achieve in line with diocesan expectations.

THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual, moral and vocational development: provision and outcomes

- Catholic life, collective worship and spiritual, moral and vocational provision is outstanding.
- Pupils show an excellent understanding of their faith both inside and outside the formal curriculum, contributing well in RE lessons and to the wider liturgical life of the school.
- The aims of both the multi-academy company and St Michael's explicitly state that the school sees its work as rooted in the teaching of Christ.
- Pupils at St Michael's know their mission statement, 'praise the Lord in work, play and prayer', and live out their Catholic mission every day. They show an excellent understanding of their faith appropriate to their age and take responsibility for their own actions.
- The children, especially older children, express their faith both in conversations and in their actions; for example they could describe how they live as Catholics and why they carry out charitable acts. One child stated that he gave his birthday money to charity.
- Pupils show a strong commitment to Catholic virtues and values. It is evident that the school has worked hard to explain, develop and embed these across the curriculum and whole school life.
- Catholic values and virtues are embedded in key policies such as behaviour. Children are able to articulate what these values and virtues mean to their everyday life and how they live them out.
- Pupils take part in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities which engages them in their faith communities. The children talk enthusiastically about altar serving, joining the choir and organising charity events in their own time.
- The children contribute very well to the liturgical life of the school and wider community. They serve at parish Masses and talk confidently about the enjoyment they get from this.
- The school has a strong inclusive atmosphere, which is greatly valued by families, pupils and governors and all who experience and contribute to it.
- The school is a safe and trusting environment where there is mutual respect, regardless of differences. Good behaviour is recognised and rewarded in a weekly celebration assembly.
- Children feel that if they are upset there are always people for them to talk to who can help them and support their friendships. Children know that adults are there to love them, and to be kind, caring, compassionate and forgiving.
- The children's behaviour is excellent at all times and they clearly take responsibility for their own actions.
- Children understand how people are different but how all people are equal to God.
- Children have a strong sense of their own faith and how this can be nurtured so that they can be the person God wants them to be.
- During acts of worship the children showed great reverence and respect. They join in enthusiastically and show an outstanding ability to listen, give thanks, to forgive and be forgiven.
- Acts of worship engage the children and they are able to answer questions showing a deep understanding of the Catholic liturgy.
- The school plans a variety of collective worship which demonstrates a commitment to a range of prayer styles appropriate to the children's age.
- Traditional prayers are taught in a systematic and progressive way to all pupils. As a result, children have a good knowledge of these prayers.

- All pupils, including nursery children, are involved in traditions such as the May procession.
- Music plays an important role within collective worship, ensuring it is reflective and spiritual, allowing the children the opportunity to feel close to God. One child commented that the music made her feel holy.
- Collective worship involves all stakeholders within the school; staff, parents, and governors took part in a penitential service, therefore witnessing and providing an example to the children. This is very much a Catholic community, worshipping together under the direction of committed clergy for the benefit of the spiritual development of the children, both Catholic and those of other faiths or none.
- Children are able to confidently recite a variety of prayers including the act of contrition, understanding the importance of it within their lives.
- Pupils, under the guidance of the RE subject leader, plan and prepare acts of worship. Children confidently discuss using the Ordo to help with their planning, they also understand the four parts of collective worship. Children evaluate collective worship to ensure continual improvement.
- In preparation for the season of Christmas, Reception class have made their own advent wreath from trees and evergreen leaves around school. The children could explain the significance of the different parts of the advent wreath and understood the importance of it.
- Some children, especially older children, are encouraged to think and wonder about aspects of the Catholic faith. These questions are recorded and discussed, children can then talk in detail about their faith and the questions which they have. Children's faith has been strengthened because of these discussions.
- The quality of provision for pupils' social and moral development is excellent.
- Pupils have a growing understanding of vocation and choose to use their gifts and talents to serve others. For example older children willingly give up their time to act as prayer leaders and buddies to younger children, using their gifts to help others.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership of Catholic life and Collective Worship

- The school rightly judges itself to be outstanding in leadership of Catholic life and collective worship.
- At all levels leaders promote the Catholic life of the school in the local community and within the school very effectively. The principal and governors share a strong commitment to the Catholicity of the school. This is evident in all documentation and discussions from the board of directors to leaders within the classrooms.
- Governors are very aware of their responsibilities for both Catholic life and RE and play a full part in shaping the direction of St Michael's as a Catholic school.
- Governors play a key role in the success of the school by holding the staff to account whilst also playing a supportive role to them. They have developed secure systems to support and challenge, based on a stewardship model, which they have developed through discussion and reflection.
- Governors evaluate and monitor the action plan well and ensure developments happen. Consequently, the academy committee has a clear understanding about how the Catholic life action plan is developed and monitored.
- The principal produces clear information for governors who challenge and support the school to drive continual improvements.
- Catholic life is central to the school community and is evident in everything the school does.
- The school has a consistent approach to monitoring and evaluating Catholic life which involves systematic processes which focus on the benefits to all pupils.

- Children are involved in monitoring and evaluating the Catholic life of the school.
- Monitoring is both formal and informal and is having a positive influence across the school.
- Self-evaluation of Catholic life and worship is a coherent reflection of monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge. The school rightly evaluated that there was a need to develop strategies for helping children to reflect and meditate. The school has implemented an action plan including training and children are now becoming more reflective.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Leadership, outcomes from and provision for religious education

- The school rightly judges all aspects of religious education as good, the senior leadership team (SLT) have identified areas for improvement and have appropriate plans and actions to address these areas.
- The RE subject leader monitors the provision of religious education regularly and this has led to improvements in outcomes for some children. This now needs to extend to monitoring specific groups of children, such as disadvantaged pupils or according to gender, to identify differences in performance.
- Monitoring encompasses work scrutiny, pupil voice and learning walks. The academy committee take part in learning walks, which have contributed to their understanding of the strengths and the areas of development in school.
- Monitoring in RE is linked to whole school improvement priorities, the school development plan identifies priorities based on monitoring evidence which is discussed and shared by all staff and governors.
- Whole school tracking and assessments are accurate and moderated across the MAC.
- The SLT are not complacent and continually strive for higher standards.
- Following monitoring staff are given development points which are tracked by the RE subject leader; support plans are in place which are monitored to ensure improvements take place.
- Governors have oversight of religious education and fulfil their statutory and canonical responsibilities well.
- Most pupils make good progress from entry to exit, and within and between key stages, developing secure knowledge, skills and understanding in RE.
- Baseline assessments indicate children have little RE knowledge when entering the school. Most children make good progress throughout their time at school to leave at least in line with diocesan expectations.
- Pupils are keen to do well, work diligently within lessons and are keen to show their work, explaining why they are proud of it and how they can improve.
- Within the best RE lessons work is matched to the children's ability and links are made across the curriculum areas.
- In Year 6 RE lessons success criteria is shared with the children which clearly helps them to learn, with the children often choosing the challenging success criteria. However, this practice is not consistent across the school. Therefore, the work set is not always challenging enough, especially for higher ability children.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge which enables them, and therefore the children, to see and make some links across the curriculum. For example in upper Key Stage 2 a geography lesson about mountains made links with St Patrick climbing Mount Croagh.

- The links across the curriculum that are beginning to be made help children to understand that RE cannot be taught in isolation.
- A range of teaching styles and activities sustain pupils' concentration and motivation. Children feel that their teachers try to make RE exciting by using drama and art. As a result, the majority of children enjoy their RE lessons.
- Some resources are used effectively during lessons e.g. showing the children an advent wreath to explain the various parts and symbols.
- Use of new technology in RE is limited due to the availability of resources. Children feel that this impacts on their learning.
- To ensure lower ability and SEN children are making good progress teachers could use more visual prompts such as word mats.
- The religious education curriculum is enriched through well planned visits and visitors which engage and motivate pupils.
- Children spoke about their enjoyment of visits to places of worship of other faiths. These visits help them to understand other faiths; how we should live together harmoniously and that regardless of difference we are all equal to God.
- Teachers use next steps marking focused on RE and children usually respond to their teachers' comments in their written work. Children could clearly articulate the RE marking policy and how this improves their work.
- Marking does not always address key issues of RE literacy and some basic mistakes are not identified and corrected e.g. capital letters for God and Jesus.
- Children's written RE work is of the same standard as their literacy work.
- The school uses the diocesan curriculum strategy to good effect which ensures all children, regardless of their starting points, achieve very well.
- In weaker lessons the teacher's expectations of pupils' work needs to be raised to ensure the higher ability children are challenged. Teachers could make more use of modelling and prompts so that children are confident to work at a higher level.
- Relationship and sex education provides pupils with the understanding that they need at their respective ages consistent with the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Recommendations

In order to improve the school should:

- Develop the teaching of RE to ensure it is all outstanding by raising teachers' expectations, especially of higher ability pupils. Ensure differentiation is effective, and that resources such as prompts, modelling and new technologies are used effectively, so all groups of children are making at least good progress.
- Improve the analysis of the performance of different groups of children in order to improve the attainment and progress of RE within, between and at the end of each key stage.
- Improve the school's self-evaluation in RE at all levels from directors to classroom practitioners. This will lead to a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas of development which will ensure outcomes for most pupils are high and for some are exceptionally so.