



St Michael's Catholic Primary School

URN: 118756

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Most Rev. John Wilson, Archbishop of Southwark

14–15 December 2023

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

Catholic life and mission (p.2)

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

Religious education (p.4)

The quality of curriculum religious education

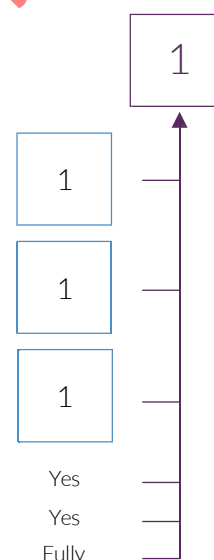
Collective worship (p.6)

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

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



What the school does well

- Provides a calm purposeful environment which promotes progress in learning.
- Provides embedded opportunities for prayer and reflection fostering a sense of purpose, wellbeing and sense of respectful pride.
- Caters for the needs of every individual in the school both staff and pupils.
- Fosters strong partnerships with families and the wider community.

What the school needs to improve

- Embed Catholic Social Teaching principles across the school.
- Extend opportunities to explore other faiths.
- Develop governors' understanding of and contribution to the Catholic school's evaluation process.

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

Pupil outcomes

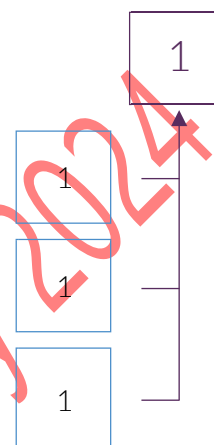
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

Provision

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

Leadership

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



The Catholic life and mission is at the heart of the daily life of the children and staff at this school. Children are excited to describe how Jesus is part of their lives and forms the basis of discussions across all age groups. Pupils understand and live out the school motto and the life and teaching of their patron saint St Michael the Archangel, improving their own lives and the lives of others. The whole school community is immersed in its CIRCLE values: Care, Independence, Resilience, Church, Learning, and Enjoyment, which guide pupils to treat one another with the utmost respect, recognising each individual as a creation of Christ. As a result, pupils feel listened to, safe and cared for, affording each other the greatest respect for other faiths and the diversity of the school. Pupils shine as they work and play with one pupil taking time to express how she 'loves to come to school.' They are aware of their responsibilities with the Catholic Social Teachings principles and willingly take on roles and responsibilities which enable them to use their gifts to improve the lives of everyone in the school community. There are now opportunities for this to be consistently embedded across the school. There are a range of leadership opportunities afforded to pupils, including, school councillors, restorative justice champions, eco-warriors and digital leaders. Responsibilities are undertaken with great professionalism and pride. Pupils respond to local, nation and global charities including singing at the Acorns Care Home, working with the Catholic Children's Society and Cafod collections. Activities are led by Mini Vinnies represented by pupils from across all age groups. Parent responses to the school and its provision were overwhelmingly positive with many comments of praise for the opportunities the school affords their children.

Provision for relationships, sex and health education, R(S)HE, meets both the statutory and diocesan requirements. Pastoral care is a feature of this school, most recently the school has benefited from a Creative Education mental health lead, which enhances the support for children in Lego therapy, Draw and Talk and emotional literacy. School leaders and governors, embrace the school's diversity and use this to live out Catholic Social Teaching in their inclusivity. They actively involve parents in the Catholic life of the school including cultural events to ensure all the parents and families are represented. This partnership extends to supporting parents in learning. Themes and topics are

provided to parents in advance and where a topic may be considered sensitive in R(S)HE, the school offers support for parents enabling them to support and guide their child at home. The leadership team encourage all staff to plan activities and events for pupils to take part in. Participation is celebrated through weekly assemblies where leaders promote pupil role models and teach pupils to take praise. Staff and pupils are actively involved in the selection of and voting for individual pupils providing a warm inclusive environment where everyone is recognised for their individual gifts and skills.

Leaders make full use of links with the diocese, Chatham Deanery and a range of online training resources which staff benefit from. Staff are praised for their commitment to the schools' work and values through a system and culture of support and praise including Thankyou Thursday, where pupils thank staff for the work they do. Strategic decisions at leadership level support a sense of purpose and worth impacting on a number of school improvements leading to progress in learning and the whole school environment. These include a strategic change in the school's behaviour policy to include restorative justice and adjustments to the uniform policy. Leaders communicate well with parents and innovative parental communication groups foster a sense of purpose and community.

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Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

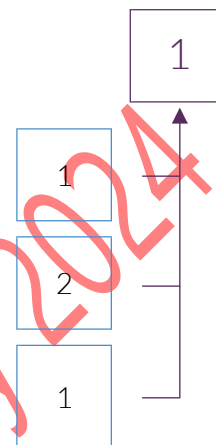
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Progress across the school is above local and national averages with religious education outcomes matching those for English and Maths. Pupils from nursery to year 6 engage fully and show great enjoyment in their religious education lessons. They can describe what they must do and how they can improve, being provided with regular discussion and reflection opportunities throughout the lessons. Pupils demonstrate a deep respect of each other resulting in a positive learning environment where pupils feel safe to take chances and express opinion. Pupils take pride in their work as evidenced by the exceptional quality of and standards in books. They can use a high level of technical language with the parish priest commenting on their ability to explore and discuss scripture at a theological level. The studies of scripture have a direct impact on children's behaviour and their responses to each other and their teachers. This results in opportunities for pupils to explore their learning and relate learning to life.

Teachers are confident with the subject knowledge and use appropriate religious education language tailored to the age and stage of the pupils. A focus on four key questions for reading the Bible, is used consistently to enable pupils to explore their work and be clear about what is expected of them. A target tracking system is used to identify progress towards each skill. Information is used to set targets for each pupil and communicate progress to parents. The school is fully compliant with the requirements by the Bishops' Conference both in time and content of the curriculum, with assessment tracking being forensically mapped to the *Religious Education Directory*. All staff use assessment for learning techniques effectively to engage pupils including those pupils with complex learning needs. Deep challenge happens where the best teaching is taking place. Personalised continuous professional development supports staff confidence in the delivery of religious education. School leaders support staff with good quality training. Other faiths are explored throughout the year with the school using parental experience to enhance provision there is now an opportunity for this to be further extended. Bibles are used as a regular resource in religious education lessons with pupils being familiar and comfortable with the text. For example, a Year 1 lesson where pupils were exploring how special Mary was. Pupils were asked to find Mary's journey in the appropriate Gospel and sequence the 'special journey'.

The subject lead has an inspiring vision for religious education, modelling the highest standards in support and provision. Together with the leadership team, they regularly review provision and training ensures a sustained high-quality provision. Religious education has full parity with other subjects in timetable and funding. The religious educational taught time is further enhanced by the strategic use of additional planned taught liturgy lessons which enriches through study of scripture leading to prayer and reflection. Religious education has a dedicated governor who alongside other governors and priests regularly visit lessons. Weekly support, from the priests, forms part of the ongoing formation for teachers of religious education. Leaders and governors are involved in regular evaluation of activities and provide appropriate challenge. Leadership of special educational needs, SEN, is a strength of the school with exemplary support of pupils with special education needs extending to religious education. A parent commented on 'Christian values being reflected in the SEN department'. The highly skilled team of staff are trained supporting the individual learning requirements of a range of pupils with complex needs. This leads to all children whatever their needs being able to engage and make progress in every aspect of their religious education as well as participate in and take a full part in the school community.

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Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

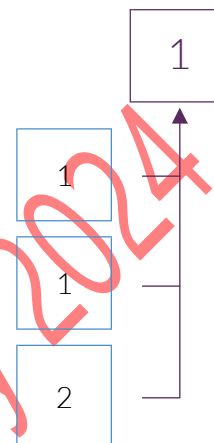
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

Leadership

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



Pupils embrace every opportunity to engage in and lead prayer and liturgy in the daily life of the school. Pupils are animated in their prayer leader roles, leading collective worship taught sessions with confidence and authority. Pupil prayer leaders take a leading role in guiding discussion and reflection about Catholic Social Teaching through prayer and liturgy. In addition to this, children are encouraged to explore what makes them special as individuals and recognise and use the gifts given to them by God. Pupils openly value this and can articulate how they can make a difference. They enthusiastically engage in deep discussions about how scripture informs us of Jesus' messages as to how we live our lives to be the very best we can be. Reception big books are used to celebrate and record awe and wonder opportunities for every child. Children as early as nursery sing, pray and explore their 'wonderful world', enabling them to appreciate their gifts, blessings and give thanks. A pupil said, 'This school is special because every Wednesday we go to church'. Pupils of all faiths and none, value prayer and liturgy as spiritual opportunities of reflection and praise. A parent commented that 'there is really something special about this school, with a culture of kindness shining through'. A calm, purposeful environment underpins a truly Christian community rooted in the teachings of the Catholic Church. Staff and pupils speak openly about the embedded CIRCLE values which underpin the 'family of God'.

A member of staff quoted 'We really are one big family because we really are a family of God, who worries and cares about everyone.' This is supported by similar quotes from the children in key stage 2 who said, 'This school is special, because God is with us and we give our bodies to God so God can come to us' and 'We can put what we learn into action'. The carol service rehearsal involving all key stage 2 pupils, in the parish church was an example of conscious participation with pupils working collaboratively with staff to create a moving experience for the school community to enjoy. The service included pupils in reading, acting, singing and listening to scripture. Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of the school. The experiences provided by the school are embedded into the daily life. A wide range of significant moments arise through the provision. For example, where pupils share their gifts and achievements with their parents, who were in attendance, at a celebration assembly. Provision at St Michael's goes above and beyond prayer spaces, focal points, Masses and liturgies it extends to a taught liturgy lesson which enables pupils to explore scriptures deeply identifying how each individual

can act on the scripture message. Parents are welcomed into the school to provide additional worship opportunities.

Staff including senior leaders are inspiring models of exemplary practice, which is further modelled throughout the school in all aspects of prayer and liturgy. The school is privileged to have access to their local church adjacent to the school which they make optimum use of. In addition, the school works closely with the priests to provide regular worship experiences for the whole school community. Well formulated policies are in place which enable staff to plan and prepare for purposeful liturgies. An annual calendar of events is planned in accordance with the church's liturgical calendar to include key events including the school feast day of St Michael the Archangel. Governors visit the school regularly attending liturgical events, visiting classrooms and supporting leaders. Opportunities to ensure that they understand and contribute to school self-evaluation will further strengthen prayer and liturgy.

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Information about the school

Full name of school	St Michael's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	118756
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	8873712
Full postal address of the school	St Michael's Catholic Primary School, Hills Terrace, Chatham, ME4 6PX
School phone number	01634832578
Headteacher	Nicola Collins
Chair of Governors	Patrick Harrison
School Website	www.stmichaelsrcp.org
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	N/A
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	5-6 November 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Catherine Burnett
Michelle Wilson

Lead
Team

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