



# Archdiocese of Birmingham

## INSPECTION REPORT

### ST MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL WOLVERHAMPTON

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Inspection dates	27 <sup>th</sup> - 28 <sup>th</sup> September 2011
Reporting Inspector	Mrs Teresa Quick

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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Type of School	Catholic Primary
Age range of pupils	4-11 years
Number on roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mrs R Watkins
School address	Telford Gardens Merry Hill Wolverhampton WV3 7LE
Telephone number	01902 556 386
E-mail address	stmichaelsrcprimaryschool@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	March 2009
DCSF School Number	336/3307
Unique Reference Number	104377

<b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Mrs Catherine Williams</b>
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DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one Diocesan Inspector. The inspector visited 3 full religious education (RE) lessons to observe teaching and learning and pupils' behaviour, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. She observed the school's work, including Mass and key stage assemblies/prayer services and looked at a range of evidence, including key documentation including the school and subject development plans, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in RE, and pupils' work.

## Information about the school

St Michael's is an average sized primary school that serves the parish of St Michael in Wolverhampton. The school is in the final stages of reducing the level of admissions to protect the Catholic ethos and increase Catholic percentage pupil numbers. There are 210 pupils on roll of whom 74% are baptised Catholics with another 32 attending the Nursery. Approximately a third of the pupils travel from outside the parish boundaries. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and / or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs is low. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to the national average. The majority of the pupils come from a White British background. There is a small percentage of pupils from other major world faiths.

## Overall effectiveness of the school as a Catholic school

St Michael's is a good Catholic school enjoying a strong Catholic life under outstanding leadership of the Catholic life by the headteacher and good leadership by the subject leader. There is a consistency of purpose and expectation. The school has been through a period of staff instability caused through long term illnesses. Throughout this time, the Catholic life of the school has remained strong through the determination of the senior leadership and governors. RE lessons (called Faith lessons within the school) were monitored and effective action taken when necessary to ensure that learning progressed. A permanent subject leader for RE was appointed after the last inspection. She works closely with the headteacher and has done much work to develop both the Catholic life and religious education and has supported staff, especially those new to the school, very well. Evaluation of learning in RE within the school is clear and accurate. There is a warm welcoming atmosphere where pupils are happy to come to learn, where they feel secure and where parents are valued. There are excellent links with the parish in particular with the parish based sacramental programme in which the headteacher, the subject leader, staff, and a governor join parishioners as catechists. The school lives its mission well "Praise the Lord in work, play and prayer."

Pupils enter school with limited knowledge and understanding of the faith or prayer. They achieve well because of the ethos of the school and their eagerness to learn. Most pupils reach the standards expected of them for their age. Behaviour is very good. Morale is high and pupils are proud of their school. The provision for collective worship and the spiritual and moral development of pupils is very good. Pupils participate very well in collective worship. The quality of provision for RE is good. Assessment, which was identified as needing development at the last inspection, continues to be an area for improvement, although much work has been done.

Due to the leadership of the governors, headteacher, and the subject leader, the school's capacity for sustained improvement in RE and the Catholic life is good. They have the determination to develop both the Catholic life and the teaching of RE. The chair of governors is very knowledgeable about the needs of Catholic education and, with other governors, is very active in her support for the school. Members of the governing body are well informed about RE and the Catholic life of the school through both formal and informal procedures.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the development of assessment in religious education
- Develop the pupils' understanding of other religions
- Develop a cohesive curriculum for RE to meet the needs and individual character of the school which will include all elements of RE and with clear links to other subjects

## How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Standards of attainment in religious education are average overall, but progress is good and pupils enjoy their learning in the subject. Some pupils achieve above average standards. Baseline assessment shows that only a limited number of pupils enter school with any appreciation of the Catholic faith or prayer life. Pupils in the Foundation Stage make good progress in their learning in RE. In the lessons observed during the inspection pupils settled quickly to their work and were enthusiastic learners capable of working independently or collaboratively. Work matched to the differing abilities of the pupils assists in their progress in some classes. Pupils with particular learning needs and / or disabilities achieve well as a result of targeted help. Generally written work shows clear progression with a range of different styles of recording. Most pupils enjoy their RE: this is particularly so in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2. Year 2 have a good knowledge of the Old and New Testament stories, miracles and parables. With continuity of good teaching they have the potential to achieve very well by Year 6.

The extent to which pupils contribute to the Catholic life of the school is good. They benefit greatly from the Catholic life. Pupils are aware why they are at St Michael's: they know it is a Catholic school and what is different and special about being in a Catholic school. The pupils, from their early days in school, are caught up in the Catholic life which permeates the school. The school, with the support of regular visits from the parish priest, enables the pupils to develop spiritually and morally. They soon learn right from wrong. They understand and absorb the values of the school.

Pupils' response to collective worship is very good. The Mass during the inspection was well planned. Pupils sang and responded with reverence and dignity. Pupils' behaviour was excellent throughout the Mass. A number of parents and parishioners joined the pupils for Mass ensuring it was a community occasion. The key stage assemblies/prayer services held during the inspection were both very well led by a teacher. Pupils listened and learned and behaviour was excellent, but there was limited pupil participation. The Key Stage 2 assembly developed the pupils' understanding of the lives of the saints, in particular the life of St Lawrence. The Key Stage 1 assembly was prayerful, calm and simple and involved pupils talking to each other. A feature of the Key Stage 1 prayer service was the reading from the next Sunday's Gospel from *Wednesday Word* a publication that is bought to help families pray together. Pupils have a developing knowledge of the traditional prayers of the Church. They are able to write and say their own prayers. Year 6 pupils spoke with enjoyment about meditation.

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

Leadership of the Catholic life is outstanding. The headteacher sets high expectations for all members of the school community. There is a strong Catholic ethos. The governors fulfil their canonical responsibilities extremely well. The importance that governors give to the Catholicity of the school is seen in their radical step to reduce the intake of the school to protect that Catholicity. One effect will be evident next year when a spare classroom is transformed into a chapel. The chair and vice chair of governors are both very knowledgeable and hold the school to account for the development of the Catholic life. Formal reports are given by the headteacher to the full governing body on the Catholic life. The link governor for RE informally monitors the Catholic life of the school on his regular visits and in his meetings with the subject leader. All documentary evidence is

discussed and copies of development planning and audits relating to Catholic life are given to him. The role of the link governor has improved since the last inspection. The subject leader has a key role both in school and in linking with the parish. Monitoring of Mass provision has led to the introduction of Communion under both kinds at upper Key Stage 2 class Masses. In the school entrance, the school hall and all around the school there are displays, crucifixes, statues and artefacts that remind everyone that this is a Catholic school. Each classroom has a prayer focus. From their visits to the school, from the headteacher's report, and from the subject leader's talks, governors are aware of the Catholic life of the school and what needs to be improved. The school works well to improve the Catholic life of the school community.

The subject leader for RE has been permanently appointed since the last inspection. She has very good subject knowledge and leads the subject with enthusiasm, supporting staff to enable the teaching of RE to move forward. She observes lessons, monitors planning, regularly checks the pupils' books and is developing monitoring strategies which are still to be completed. There are detailed audits for a number of areas of learning and a clear plan for improvement. These plans have been slower in their implementation due to staffing difficulties. Standards that pupils achieve are at least satisfactory and improving. Pupils benefit from generally good teaching and the regular monitoring ensures that teaching and learning standards are maintained. Pupils' personal and religious development is greatly enhanced by the care and guidance they receive from a leadership that is passionate in giving the pupils the best religious experiences they can. The school extends the pupils' understanding of their Catholic heritage by a visit to St Chad's Cathedral and by visitors to the school invited to speak about areas related to Catholic life. The notion of vocation is encouraged with seminarians talking with the pupils and sisters visiting the school. The residential visit to Alton Castle provides good support for Catholic life. Pupils develop their understanding of justice and peace through their RE teaching assemblies, SEAL (Social, and Emotional Aspects of Learning) and the Catholic ethos of the school. The visit of the Pope is still clear in the minds of the pupils as the school was chosen to represent the diocese at the "Big Assembly" at St Mary's, Twickenham.

The school makes good provision for community cohesion. Pupils work and play together and are supportive of each other. There are good relationships with parents. Parents are actively involved in the development of the chapel with a group making tapestries. The school is integrated into parish life: pupils receive a copy of the parish newsletter weekly and members of staff are involved in the parish sacramental programme. The school council encourages pupils to support various charities. There are many opportunities to provide help and support for those in need through various different fund raising opportunities throughout the year for CAFOD, Fr Hudson's Society, Operation Christmas Child, the local Hospice, and Comic Relief. Harvest Food goes to support the work of the Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd. The school is working towards fair trade status. Pupils are gaining an understanding of the global nature of the Church. Through a local priest the school is developing links with a school in a village in India which helps to broaden their knowledge and understanding of other people's cultures and situations. Pupils are encouraged to become involved with activities locally. The school recognises the need to develop stronger links with interfaith groups and to provide opportunities for pupils to visit other places of worship. Links with the local Catholic community of schools are good. Teachers are involved in their Catholic cluster groups.

## **The quality of the school's work in providing Catholic education**

The quality of teaching is good. The judgement was made from teaching seen both in class and during the prayer services, the work in the pupils' books, from displays and from discussion with pupils. Teachers select what they teach from the units of the diocesan *Curriculum Strategy for Religious Education*. The subject manager monitors progression from teachers' planning and through assessments, book trawls and lesson observations. Long term absences and retirement of members of staff have all impacted on the school's ability to provide a high level of consistency in provision. However leaders have ensured good learning overall in RE as any uneven progress is quickly observed and remedial action taken. The school is striving to provide work which matches the needs of the individual and written work generally shows clear progression. Skilled teaching assistants provide a good level of support for pupils with special needs and / or disabilities and

other groups within the classes. The majority of pupils say they enjoy their RE lessons. Behaviour is very good. ICT is used to support research in RE. Marking is positive but there is limited explanation of how pupils may improve their learning. The assessment process is still developing in its impact. There are some good examples of moderated work.

Curriculum provision in RE is good. The curriculum is broad but at present lacks a whole school plan which makes links between RE and other subjects and which is available to all staff. RE is taught as a discrete subject but can also form part of cross curricular work. There are good links with literacy, art and music. The percentage of time allocated to RE is in line with that required by the Bishop's Conference. A general resource base is now being developed but currently lacks books and artefacts to support the teaching of other faiths. Each term teachers provide parents with a summary of the RE curriculum and the dates of the class Masses. Family life and sex education teaching follows diocesan guidelines and has been revised to incorporate the diocesan scheme. PSHE has close links to the RE curriculum with the subject leader covering both curriculum areas. Pupils learn not just from lessons but from assemblies, Masses, cross-curricular experiences and the whole Catholic ethos of the school. Day and residential visits to Alton Castle, visits to local churches, visits from speakers from *Life* and Fr Hudson's Society provide further enrichment to the curriculum. The Catholic life of the school and religious education always form part of the school improvement planning.

Provision for collective worship is very good and supports pupils' spiritual and moral development well. Evidence shows that much work has been and is being done to develop the prayer life of the school. Each classroom has a prayer focus with appropriate artefacts. Prayer is an important part of the school day. In May and October the subject leader leads a voluntary prayer group of parents and pupils to say a decade of the rosary in front of a beautiful statue of Our Lady. A chapel is in the early stages of construction and will be ready for use later this term for class Masses, prayer services and quiet prayer. The subject leader has produced a good induction pack to support newly appointed and long-term supply staff. There is a Mass in school each week for differing groups of pupils. Masses are usually held in school, but for special feasts like the feast of St Michael and on holy days the pupils go to St Michael's Church some distance from the school.