



St Michael Catholic Primary School

Feltham Hill Road, Ashford Surrey, TW15 2DG

Date of inspection: 7th May 2014

A. Classroom Religious Education

What is the overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy?

Overall Grade I*

The overall effectiveness of classroom religious education in developing pupils' religious literacy is outstanding. The curriculum is based on the delivery of the Curriculum Directory supported by the 'Year of Faith' units and the 'Come and See' scheme of work. Pupils make excellent progress in their subject knowledge of the Catholic faith through the challenge and expectation of their teachers and thorough, detailed tracking. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and appreciate the wide range of teaching methods used by staff. Attainment is excellent and often exceeds diocesan expectations. Self-evaluation is up to date, detailed, accurate and illustrates an excellent awareness of development areas for religious education. Outstanding leadership of religious education supports the setting of challenging targets for pupils and provides opportunities for new staff to see excellent teaching. There are very good systems in place for monitoring all aspects of teaching and learning as well as regular participation in deanery and diocesan moderation.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What is the overall effectiveness of the Catholic life of the school in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing?

Overall Grade I*

The school is outstanding in its effectiveness in developing pupils' experience of the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing. The vision of the new headteacher, school leadership team and governors, supported by local clergy, are instrumental in ensuring that worship and prayer are central to the life of the school and are well planned and resourced. The celebration of the Eucharist and Reconciliation are offered at key times of the year with pupils' active participation in the preparation. Religious education is valued and recognised as the core of the curriculum and is given an excellent range of resources, which are kept under constant review. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the social teaching of the Church. They have very many opportunities to develop personal responsibility and engage in action to support those in need locally and in the wider world. There is an appreciation of being part of the local deanery and Diocese of Westminster. Governors make a highly significant contribution to the work and Catholic dimension of the school. They have a high level of expertise and fully understand their role as governors of a diocesan Catholic school.

Introduction

The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection. The inspectors spent one day in school, visited fourteen lessons and one assembly, and carried out seven interviews with school staff, pupils and governors. Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, discussion with local clergy, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

The Inspection of St Michael Catholic Primary School, Ashford was carried out under the requirements of the Canon 806 and Education Act 2005, and in accordance with the Framework for Section 48 Inspections approved by the Archbishop of Westminster. The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. This process begins with the school's own self-evaluation.

Inspection Team

Mrs Pamela Brannigan	Lead Inspector
Mrs Catherine Nathan	Associate Inspector

Description of School

The school is two form entry in the LA of Surrey and the borough of Spelthorne. The school serves the parishes of St Michael's in Ashford and St David's in Stanwell. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 97%. The proportion of pupils who come from other Christian denominations is 2% and from other faiths, 1%. The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 76%.

There are 428 pupils on roll. There are 8 pupils with statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is, at 35%, above average. The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is below average. There is a well below average rate of families claiming free school meals. Thirty two pupils receive the Pupil Premium Grant.

Telephone:	01784 253333
e-mail address:	head@st-michaels.surrey.sch.uk

DFE Number:	9363915
URN Number	125233

Headteacher:	Mr J. Lane
Chair of Governors:	Mr C. Taylor

Date of previous inspection:	4 th March 2008
------------------------------	----------------------------

Key for inspection grades:	<i>Grade 1*</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
	<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Very Good</i>
	<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Good</i>
	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Requires improvement</i>
	<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Causing Concern</i>

A. Classroom Religious Education

How religiously literate are pupils in the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith and how well do they know, understand and appreciate the importance of religious faith and practice in everyday life?

What has improved in classroom religious education since the last inspection?

There were two areas for development identified in the last inspection. Both have been very well addressed. The first was linked to the further development of assessment. Since then the school has put in place a thorough review of assessment in the light of the agreed understanding of levels of attainment and the Curriculum Directory. 'Classroom Monitor' is used weekly by staff to record pupils' attainment and enables them to produce challenging whole school and individual targets. The second area was to monitor written work more systematically to ensure continuity, progression and coverage. The subject leader attended diocesan training in accurate monitoring which has been shared with all staff. Currently, moderating sessions take place each half term which has led to an increase in teachers' confidence in levelling pupils' work accurately. In addition, the subject leader has developed tasks for summative assessment based on the new level descriptors of attainment. Self-assessment for pupils is now a feature of many lessons and has resulted in an awareness of the steps needed for further improvement.

How well does the content of classroom religious education meet the requirements of the Curriculum Directory?

Grade 1*

The Curriculum Directory is an integral part of the religious education curriculum which is creative, engaging and meets learning needs. The programmes of study and schemes of work used provide a systematic study of the life and teachings of Jesus and the Church and the relationship between life and faith. Very good resources are used creatively to ensure the provision of an interesting and challenging curriculum. Medium term planning illustrates how the content of the Curriculum Directory is studied across the key stages and the ways in which the four areas are revisited to show progression and depth of provision.

Pupil achievement (as well as attainment and progress) in religious education

Grade 1*

Pupil achievement, attainment and progress overall is outstanding in religious education. The school's own assessment systems are robust and thorough and in line with other core subjects. Both internal and external moderation is used to ensure judgements are accurate and pupils actively engage in setting targets for their own learning. Rigorous analysis of data and detailed self-evaluation demonstrates that attainment and progress is exceptional at all key stages and pupils make rapid and appropriate progress. In all classes observed there were a variety of activities and pupils were enthusiastic, engaged and eager to discuss their learning. They displayed a thirst for knowledge and a keen interest in religious education. The school makes excellent provision for all groups of pupils and sets challenging targets for all. In Year 6 pupils are taught in ability groups and there is strong evidence of a significant group of pupils achieving at level 5. Pupils' workbooks and written work are of a high standard and very well presented with a clear sense of pride. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' religious literacy is of a very high standard and reaches or exceeds diocesan expectations.

The quality of teaching

Grade I*

The quality of teaching is outstanding. During the inspection much of the teaching observed in all key stages was outstanding. Teachers used well judged and imaginative strategies including ICT, which engaged pupils and matched their learning needs accurately. In Key Stage 2 there were examples of role play, diary writing and group work on 'The Gifts of the Holy Spirit' and Pentecost which helped pupils in developing their knowledge and understanding. In Reception and Key Stage I, pupils were given opportunities to learn outside the classroom in the prayer garden. Youngest pupils 'listened to the wind' to help them understand some aspects of Pentecost. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong; almost all have the CCRS or similar qualification. Planning is clear with appropriate activities and targets for all groups. All lessons observed included recapitulation of previous learning to ensure secure understanding. Reference to scripture was widely used. Teachers use open ended and challenging questions and encourage discussion with talk partners to deepen and enhance learning. Clear and consistent marking across the school with constructive feedback enables pupils to understand how to improve their work. This was evidenced through conversations with pupils in class, school council, liturgy leaders, work scrutiny and internal monitoring. Assessment opportunities are evident in lessons and in pupils' work. Homework is set across the school and home learning is supported through curriculum information newsletters and the 'Wednesday Word'. The school has also begun to provide excellent notes, resources and parent workshops to support religious education. Support for new teachers from the subject leader is very good. All teachers have high expectations, excellent subject knowledge and deliver well planned and imaginative lessons. This enables pupils to make excellent progress over time and to learn exceptionally well.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of religious education

Grade I*

The leadership and management of religious education is excellent. The experienced subject leader is knowledgeable and, together with the headteacher, has shared her vision for excellence with all staff which is well supported by the whole school community, including the effective governing body. The excellent systems in place to regularly monitor, track and ensure pupil progress have enabled leaders to support new staff and ensure high standards are maintained. The subject leader has organised a series of moderation sessions for the deanery to develop teachers' confidence in accurately assessing pupils' work. She has also participated in diocesan moderation and has an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development in religious education. The school improvement plan clearly identifies issues for action and evaluates current provision. Many governors are active in the life of the school and familiar with current developments in religious education. This enables them to challenge and support the school effectively.

What should the school do to improve further in classroom religious education?

- Continue to challenge all pupils to enable them to achieve their full potential.
- Continue to support parents in developing their subject knowledge to enable them to support their children.

B. The Catholic life of the school

How well do pupils experience the richness of a Catholic way of living and believing through all areas of school life?

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection there has been much input into teachers' theological knowledge and understanding to enhance the Catholic life of the school. Monitoring of collective worship has ensured opportunities for spiritual development have been enhanced. The theology underpinning Catholic social teaching has been emphasised to enable pupils to reflect on the significance of the Common Good. All staff have been well supported as they implement the new Diocesan Framework and the requirements of the Curriculum Directory. The introduction of 'Liturgy leaders' has given pupils additional opportunities to write and lead liturgies. Parish links have been further developed in recent years as has the introduction of the 'Wednesday Word' to support families in their understanding of the liturgical year.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum – time, staffing, accommodation, resources, budget

Grade I*

Religious education receives over 11% curriculum time and has a similar budget to other core subjects. Resources are excellent and are constantly reviewed and replaced when necessary. Space has been made available for a separate library devoted to resources for religious education. The learning environment is outstanding with attractive classroom displays and prayer tables which reflect the Church's year and are used as a focus during classroom liturgies. School leadership, including well informed governors offer very good support in developing and reviewing the quality of religious education. All staff receive regular in-service support and training related to the Catholic life of the school. Governors play a major role and are involved in self-evaluation and school improvement. The priest from St. Michael's parish supports the prayer and sacramental life and liaises with staff for a planned programme of masses and liturgies. He also acts as an additional teaching resource on his visits to classes.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community.

Grade I*

The school's provision for prayer and worship is outstanding and a key part of every school celebration. Prayer and worship are central to the daily life of the school through class prayer times and assemblies. In addition, pupils are given frequent opportunities for spiritual development through meditation and reflection. Pupils are often engaged in the planning and preparation of worship through writing their own prayers. Older pupils are encouraged to become Liturgy leaders and have begun to plan and prepare celebrations. Younger pupils can join a 'followers' group with a view to becoming Liturgy leaders in the future. Mass is celebrated in school and every half term at St Michael's parish church for Key Stage 2 classes. Pupils also visit the Church to develop their knowledge of Catholic traditions and practice. The priest from St Michael's visits frequently to talk to classes and prepare liturgies. Recently he led an Ash Wednesday liturgy and, together with the priest from St David's parish enabled all Key Stage 2 pupils to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent. In recent months parents and families have been invited to masses and

assemblies. They appreciate the opportunity this gives them to become involved in the prayer life of their children and the school. During the inspection a whole school gospel assembly led by the subject leader reflected on Christ as 'The Good Shepherd' and included prayers and intercessions from pupils. Catholic traditions are explored and experienced through retreats, visits to Westminster Cathedral, Stations of the Cross and the Rosary during the month of May. Families receive the 'Wednesday Word' which is also used as a resource for class worship.

The commitment and contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice.

Grade I*

The school is a most welcoming community which recognises the gifts and uniqueness of each individual. Pupils are encouraged to share with others in acts of service to the school through well established systems, including the school council. A wide range of charities chosen by pupils include support for Children in Need, NSPCC, Catholic Children's Society and Cafod. Pupils also visit a care home for elderly people for carol singing and support a local food bank. There are very good links with a school in Tanzania and reciprocal visits have given pupils additional opportunities to have a greater understanding of different cultural backgrounds. Conversations with pupils indicate that they have a very good understanding of the theology underpinning their support for people in need. Older pupils also have a good grasp of moral issues in society and the ethics of the market place which are frequently discussed and examined in the light of Catholic social teaching. The school offers an excellent range of extra-curricular activities to support the interests and gifts of pupils. Participation in local and national events, including sports activities, also offer involvement in the wider world. The school ensures that pupils understand the call to justice and a sense of service are essential parts of their Catholic identity.

Enabling the authentic partnership between parents, school and parish as an integral part of the Diocese, particularly through its relationship with the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf;

Grade I*

Partnership between parents, school and parish is very effective and seen by governors and leadership as an essential part of the being a diocesan school. Parish links are very good with the priest from St Michael's parish being on the governing body and actively engaged in the life of the school. School staff liaise with catechists as pupils are prepared to receive the sacraments. School premises are used by the parish for evening groups and parishioners are often invited to school events. There are also good links with St David's parish. Masses and informal visits help pupils and parents to see the Church as a vital part of school life as does the involvement of the governing body. The school works closely with parents and families and keeps them well informed through newsletters, questionnaires, curriculum meetings and consultations. The school welcomes parental participation and actively seeks to communicate a shared understanding of the mission of the school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the provision offered by the school. Many thoughtful and appreciative comments were made on the diocesan questionnaires including, 'Our daughter's faith and knowledge has grown year on year. Children are actively encouraged to live out their faith and not just talk about it. A wonderful school!' Links with the diocese are very good. Senior leaders and governors attend diocesan conferences, in-service and courses offered by Westminster Education Service. Diocesan advice and support is always sought when appointing new staff and diocesan policies are used to ensure the Catholicity of the school is maintained. The headteacher has offered school facilities to the deanery and diocese for in-service training. The subject leader has initiated a series of deanery meetings to share expertise with other diocesan schools.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school.

Grade I*

Leadership is outstanding. The headteacher, governors and senior staff are fully committed to the Church's mission in education. They demonstrate this by providing a curriculum with spiritual and moral education at its heart. Catholic life is central to the work of the school and leaders ensure that all aspects reflect the richness of a Christian way of life. The headteacher, subject leader and governors ensure that all staff have the skills and opportunities to contribute to the Catholic life of the school and there are excellent systems in place to induct and support new teachers. Pupils are given every opportunity to know the life and teachings of Jesus and the traditions of the Catholic Church. Governors make a highly significant contribution to the work and Catholic dimension of the school. They have a high level of expertise and fully understand their role as governors of a diocesan Catholic school.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- Continue to build the partnership with parents and further involve them in the life of the school.
- Further develop partnerships with local Catholic schools