

St Michael Catholic Primary School & Nursery

URN: 149289

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Westminster

22–23 January 2025

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

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 general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

Yes

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

Yes

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

Fully

1

Compliance statement

- The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference.
- The school is fully compliant with the additional requirements of the diocesan Bishop.
- All areas for improvement outlined in the previous diocesan inspection have been addressed in full.

What the school does well

- The leadership team, led by the passionate and committed headteacher, ensures that Christ is at the centre of everything that is undertaken within the school.
- The prayer life at St Michael's is outstanding, helping staff and pupils to actively live out their faith.
- Religious education lessons are very well planned and resourced, and staff have excellent subject knowledge which leads to strong outcomes for pupils.
- Engagement with parents is strong and they feel part of this thriving faith community.
- Pupils are actively engaged in supporting those in need, recognising that their role is to fulfil the commandments by 'loving one another'.

What the school needs to improve

- Enable pupils to more confidently articulate the theology that underpins the principles of Catholic social teaching.
- Ensure that pupils are given opportunities to showcase the depth of their understanding in RE lessons.

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

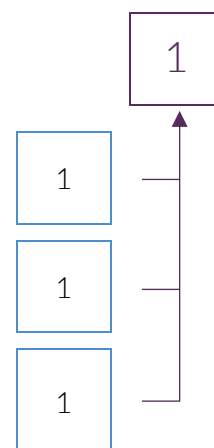
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

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



All members of the school community embrace and live out the mission 'Excellence, Enrichment, Enjoyment', with Christ at the centre. Pupils, parents, staff and governors speak of St Michael's as a community which they are proud to belong to. Pupils have a strong understanding of how we are made in God's image. Through this understanding comes a respect for all which drives the pupils to make a difference in their community. A Caritas Ambassador stated that 'we try to help others to see God around us'. The school responds to the needs of others locally, nationally and globally including pupils spending time with residents in the Echelforde Care Home. Pupils have also donated food to the MANNNA Foodbank, as well as clothing to a local church charity supporting asylum seekers and they have raised money for the Catholic Children's Society, Missio and CAFOD. One child shared 'we are disciples of Jesus therefore we have to follow what he has told us to do. The school's virtues help us to fulfil this'. Pupils have proactively put Catholic social teaching into action. Examples of this include the Caritas Ambassadors Fairtrade project. One Ambassador shared that 'it is important to be like Jesus and to stick up for fair trade workers'. Pupils develop in confidence by leading in a wide variety of chaplaincy projects. Pupils are learning to link the Catholic social teaching principles to specific parts of scripture, and this now needs to be embedded. Parents see the great work achieved by the St Michael's team in developing their child's faith. One parent stated that, 'They actively promote and role model what it means to be a Catholic, to love one another to care for our world, to develop our relationship with God and to be the best version of ourselves'.

Staff feel privileged to be a part of this community and this is evident through the high levels of care and respect they show each other and the pupils. There is an embedded culture of welcome for all, regardless of background. Parents, pupils and staff talk about St Michael's as being an authentic, family community which supports and encourages them in their faith. One parent described it as a 'beacon of excellence'. The school environment fully supports the development

of pupils, providing them with opportunities to be effective witnesses of their faith. Examples of this include the Chapel, the Gallery of Excellence, the Peace Garden, Catholic social teaching working wall, the community artwork such as the mosaic, as well as displays of house and class saints and The Imaginarium. Displays around the school are vibrant and engaging and reflect the distinctive Catholic nature of the school. Pupils are provided with many varied enrichment opportunities to enhance their spiritual development. These include the Nativity Journey at Wintershall as well as diocesan events such as the Advent Carol Service. The provision of R(S)HE is strong and meets all diocesan requirements.

On entering St Michael's, it is immediately apparent that this is a Catholic school. The governors, headteacher and senior leaders, including the religious education lead, share a vision for ensuring that the Catholic life is central to this community. They describe this as 'the golden thread which runs throughout all they do'. Leaders ensure staff have all the skills and resources needed to promote the Catholic life. Staff valued the retreat they were involved in recently which included time for their own spiritual development alongside training on Godly Play. Staff show love and care for each other and all pupils, bearing witness to the school's commitment to enable all to flourish. The school and the parish have worked together to ensure the children are able to attend Mass regularly and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Several altar servers have been trained and serve regularly at Mass. Pupil leadership has been well developed at St Michael's; one pupil explained that 'we are like Jesus' disciples – we follow Jesus who is the light of the world.'

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

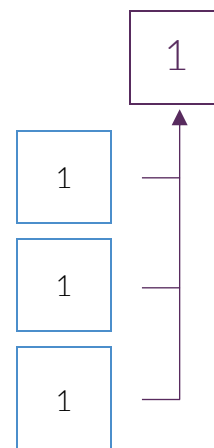
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Pupil behaviour is excellent at St Michael's and this, alongside positive attitudes to learning and enthusiasm for the subject, leads pupils to make strong progress in religious education. Religious literacy is strong; pupils can explain key terminology and use this in their learning tasks. On some occasions, pupils' depth of understanding, although articulated well, is not always evidenced. They should be given opportunities to showcase this understanding within lessons in a variety of ways. The use of Makaton, particularly in the younger year groups, ensures children learn and remember more in religious education. Staff provide a rich and varied range of creative opportunities to engage pupils in lessons including art and drama, and pupils speak of how enjoyable these lessons are. Pupils are able to draw upon prior learning to aid their understanding of new concepts; these links lead to high levels of understanding within lessons. In one lesson, younger pupils were learning that at Candlemas we celebrate that Jesus is the light of the world. They then linked this to their lives today by stating that 'I can be the light by being kind to my friends in the playground'. Pupils have a strong understanding of other faiths. One child stated that 'we need to know about other faiths so we can understand each other'.

Staff are enthusiastic about teaching religious education and ensure it is given the highest priority. They are well supported through the religious education lead and utilise diocesan resources and courses to improve their subject knowledge. A strength of the religious education teaching at St Michael's is teachers' ability to make links between previous concepts and topics; this leads to increased pupil understanding. Lessons are appropriately scaffolded to ensure all pupils achieve. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and are skilful at asking questions to check for understanding, hence maximising progress. Strong questioning is also effective in encouraging pupils to think more deeply as they make links to both scripture and their prayer life. Planning is collaborative and supportive across phases, and this ensures lessons are well-structured and progressive, which in turn leads to outstanding outcomes. Marking and feedback is consistent across the school and pupils are articulate about how this helps them to know they

have made progress. Pupils get a very good start at St Michael's as they are supported to develop their religious literacy, and this enables the very youngest children to fully engage and participate in religious education.

The leadership team has a strong commitment to promoting a high-quality religious education for all. The religious education lead, along with the Catholic life, prayer and liturgy and pupil chaplaincy leads, display servant leadership and show a real passion for this subject. Leaders are inclusive of all learners and ensure their religious education curriculum is adapted so that all pupils can achieve. Leaders place a high priority on staff professional development ensuring religious education is at the core of the curriculum and this has led to strong subject knowledge across the school. Teachers are well supported through planning sessions in phases where less experienced teachers work alongside those who are more experienced, as well as through diocesan training and courses. They speak enthusiastically about the time they are given and the responsiveness of the religious education lead. Monitoring systems are strong, both within the school and in conjunction with the Trust. These have led to ongoing improvements since the last inspection. Governors and the Trust are committed to the school, and they know it well. A generous budget is allocated to this subject area.

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

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

1

Prayer and liturgy are at the heart of the St Michael's community and are valued by all. Singing is an integral part of worship and pupils sing with joy, reverence and enthusiasm. Pupils use, understand, plan and lead a variety of prayer opportunities, such as the examen, the rosary, reflection time and spontaneous prayer as well as the standard prayers that are part of the Catholic tradition. Pupils articulate how they use prayer in their lives. One pupil stated, 'I like praying because we can talk to God and if we need help, we can ask him'. Pupils are confident, reverent and respectful in prayer sessions which are carefully planned, age-appropriate experiences. A strength of St Michael's is the pupils' confident use of spontaneous prayer. One child shared that 'we think of other people during spontaneous prayer; it's where we can have a small conversation with God'. Parents appreciate the work the school undertakes to support their role as the first educators of their child. One parent shared that, 'I sometimes hear my girls pray together before bed with a prayer book given to them by the school'. Pupils at St Michael's confidently live out their faith. They are able to make strong links with how their 'conversations with God' help them to become closer to Him, therefore living as He wants them to.

A wide range of prayer and liturgy experiences are available to pupils, staff and parents within the St Michael's community. These are based on scripture and informed by the liturgical season. There is a daily pattern of prayer across all year groups. Pupils are involved in planning and leading liturgy; they write their own prayers often in response to a piece of scripture. Prayer spaces are prioritised within the school, and these are accessible and child-friendly, thus leading to high levels of spiritual development. Examples of these include the Chapel and the Peace Garden. The celebration of the Eucharist is prioritised, and classes are rotated to attend Mass in the local parish church on a weekly basis. Pupils are confident when welcoming the Gospel and can do this in a variety of ways. Parents are included in the prayer life of the school. They are invited into school for class liturgies and assemblies on a regular basis and speak of how much

they enjoy these experiences. Home-school prayer links are strong; several parents commented on the 'travelling rosary' which their children have brought home to pray.

Leaders carefully plan out the prayer and liturgy timetable, ensuring it links closely with the liturgical year, alongside significant moments in the life of the school. This has helped lead to outstanding provision and outcomes in prayer and liturgy. Pupils have been well trained to plan and lead prayer; more importantly they are able to put prayer into action. One child commented, 'Jesus tells us to spend time with those who are old or disabled: it's better to give your time rather than a present'. Professional development is a focus, and senior leaders ensure that staff are well supported to plan and lead prayer and liturgy. This includes staff being provided with their own experiences of prayer, such as the recent retreat day. Teachers take a shared responsibility in the delivery of prayer and liturgy to the whole school, bearing witness to their faith. The head teacher is a role model in the community, leading with an understated passion whilst showing his commitment to ensuring Christ is at the centre of St Michael's. As a result of outstanding leadership in prayer and liturgy, pupils clearly articulate the importance of prayer in their lives and how this helps them to grow in their faith.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Michael Catholic Primary School & Nursery
School unique reference number (URN)	149289
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	9363915
Full postal address of the school	St Michael Catholic Primary School & Nursery, Feltham Hill Road, Ashford, TW15 2DG
School phone number	01784253333
Headteacher	John Lane
Chair of governors	Amy James
School Website	http://www.st-michaels.surrey.sch.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Ascension Catholic Academy Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	N/A
Age-range of pupils	2-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	September 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	Good

The inspection team

Robina Maher	Lead
Nick Kehoe	Team
Jade Cahill	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