



Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for
**St Michael's Catholic Primary Academy and
 Nursery**

URN: 139892

Carried out on behalf of the Most Rev. Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham on:

Date: 7-8 June 2023

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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	Fully

Summary of key findings

What the school does well

- The committed newly formed senior leadership team, supported by a strong governing body and the multi-academy company (MAC), ensures that all areas of Catholic life are prioritised, resulting in a community rooted in its mission and faith.
- It is a supportive and caring environment where all feel valued. The positive relationships between staff and pupils result in happy and enthusiastic pupils.
- Pupils behave and concentrate well in religious education lessons, enabling pupils to achieve well.

- Pupils with special educational needs or disability (SEND) achieve well in religious education due to the support given by adults and adaptations to the curriculum. They are also fully included in all areas of Catholic life and mission and the school's prayer life.
- Leaders, including MAC leaders, ensure that the school is well-supported and can make further improvements.

What the school needs to improve:

- Embed Catholic Social Teaching to make links with all curriculum areas.
- Ensure consistency in teachers' feedback to pupils in religious education, enabling pupils to reflect on and apply learning to their lives.
- Develop pupils' knowledge of traditional Catholic prayers, particularly those used at significant times within the Church's liturgical year.

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:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2

Pupils understand and clearly express the school's mission statement, 'Praise the Lord in work, play, and prayer'. This enables them to live it out by demonstrating their commitment to following the teachings and example of Jesus. Subsequently, pupils know the importance of following in Jesus' footsteps and respecting everyone. Pupils can explain the distinctive nature of their Catholic school and that they are called to act differently because of the faith. Pupils know they are cared for and loved in this faith-filled community, making them feel happy, confident, and secure. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is good throughout the school. Pupils live out the mission by thinking of others because they understand how to put their faith into action. They are proud of their many fundraising efforts. Pupils' understanding of Catholic Social Teaching is developing because it is not yet embedded within the whole curriculum.

The school environment reflects its Catholic mission; Christ is visibly at the centre of the school. Classrooms have attractive and relevant displays and prayer foci, reflecting the Church's liturgical seasons. Priority is given to creating well-prepared and liturgically appropriate sacred spaces, especially in the school chapel, which offers pupils unique areas for prayer and reflection. These make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. The mission statement is rooted in the word of God and is celebrated throughout the school. Consequently, everyone who visits the school is welcomed into the school's Catholic identity. Staff embrace the mission and are excellent role models, resulting in the mission permeating every aspect of school life. Parents appreciate the support and care staff give pupils, with one parent commenting, "Staff are excellent role models of the Catholic faith." Positive relationships are demonstrated between staff and pupils, building a strong sense of community. Parents value the school's family feel and express that their children are loved and cared for. All pupils, including those with SEND, are well supported with effective pastoral care in this fully inclusive school community. Pupil chaplains ensure prayer areas are

liturgically correct. However, they are not yet fully involved in evaluating the school's Catholic life and mission so that they can lead aspects of school improvement in this area. The school's relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) curriculum meets the requirements of the Archbishop of Birmingham.

Leaders and governors are committed to the Church's mission and living out the Gospel. Because leaders place the mission at the heart of all their work, they are well regarded as effective Catholic role models by staff. Although there have been recent changes to the school's staffing structure, leaders and governors have ensured that staff well-being has remained a priority, as demonstrated by the way staff value the support they have received from leaders and governors, including support from the MAC, which results in a happy team. One staff member told inspectors, 'There is a wonderful atmosphere of teamwork, where everyone is valued. I am always thanked for my work.' Governors are involved in various monitoring activities, and findings from these activities are shared with the full governing board. Consequently, governors know the school well and have accurately identified its strengths and areas for improvement. They subsequently offer appropriate challenges and support, supporting leaders to drive improvement. The school works well with the local parish, meaning pupils are well-prepared to receive the sacraments.

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

Provision

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

2

Leadership

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

2

Pupils are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills because they progress sequentially through the content of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. They demonstrate and articulate good prior knowledge confidently because most teachers ensure that prior knowledge is recapped in lessons. Consequently, most pupils progress in knowing and remembering more, and their attainment is good overall. Pupils, including those with SEND and other groups, achieve well as they are well-supported by adults in lessons and lessons are adapted to achieve age-related expectations. High levels of reverence and respect are given to Scripture, meaning pupils are confident and skilful in finding their way around the Bible and their knowledge of its messages. As a pupil in Year 3 explained, 'I need to turn the pages over carefully because this is a special, holy book.' In most lessons, pupils concentrate well and enjoy learning because learning is planned for appropriately; however, in some classes, the pace of learning is too slow, resulting in pupils becoming passive in their learning. Some pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work; however, this is inconsistent across the school because of the variable quality of feedback teachers provide. As a result of focusing on the proper use of religious vocabulary, pupils' religious literacy is well-developed.

Teachers' subject knowledge is generally secure across the school, resulting in mostly effective teaching. High priority is given to religious education lessons, which all start with prayer, emphasising the significance of the lesson to pupils and providing opportunities for their moral and spiritual development. Teachers' planning is linked to their assessment of pupils' achievements, resulting in well-sequenced learning, helping pupils articulate what they have learnt confidently. Some teachers use various questioning techniques during lessons to evaluate pupils' understanding whilst lessons are in progress, but the frequency of such questions varies between classrooms. In some classes, teacher questioning is more effective, and pupils are encouraged to think deeply by asking open-ended questions, consolidating learning. Some pupils respond to teachers' questions,

as required by the school's marking and feedback policy. Still, implementation of this is also inconsistent, meaning pupils in different classrooms do not have the same opportunities to deepen their learning. In some cases, teachers' feedback focuses on literacy skills rather than the requirements of the religious education curriculum, further contributing to variable provisions for deepening and consolidating pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers plan various activities to engage pupils; consequently, behaviour in lessons is good, and pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. Progress is better when teachers talk less and move pupils to apply their knowledge more quickly.

Leaders and governors ensure that it has full parity with other core subjects and that provision meets the requirements of the bishops. The newly appointed subject leader has good expertise and a clear vision for religious education. Leaders and governors ensure that a well-planned training programme is in place to support teachers, which the subject leader ably leads. This results in increased confidence in staff members, especially those not Catholic, and ensures that gaps in teachers' subject knowledge are filled in. The subject leader shares monitoring findings with governors, ensuring they know the subject's achievements fully. Data and standards of teaching in religious education are discussed at governing body meetings, and governors participate in various monitoring activities. This gives them strategic input into development plans, which are subsequently carefully monitored.

Collective worship

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

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

Pupil outcomes

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

2

Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

2

Leadership

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

2

Pupils are prayerful and responsive during worship, and they always participate with reverence. They sing joyfully and join in with prayers enthusiastically. Pupils contribute to spontaneous opportunities for prayer with confidence. They have a very good understanding of the Church's liturgical year, and the pupil chaplains ensure that the prayer foci around the school and in classrooms are always relevant to it. Prayer and liturgy are well-modelled by staff who support pupils in planning and preparing engaging prayer and liturgy experiences. Pupils are involved in planning and organising prayer but do not yet have the skills to independently plan prayer and liturgy with confidence, which limits their experience of prayer in school. Scripture is at the heart of worship, giving pupils a deep understanding of the Bible's lessons and a firm understanding of the values and virtues identified in the *Catholic School Pupil Profile*. Pupils have some knowledge of the traditional Catholic prayers used in their year groups, but this is not fully developed.

Prayer and liturgy are central to the school's daily life and are included in all school celebrations and assemblies. A clear plan is in place to celebrate significant liturgical times, such as Holy Days of Obligation and key significant traditions, including a Marian procession and patron saint days for each class. The school provides a daily pattern of prayer that follows the Church's liturgical seasons. Pupils understand the importance of talking to God through prayer because of the importance of doing this, which is clearly communicated by staff. Prayer at St Michael's always has a clear message and purpose. Scripture is always given the highest priority and is carefully chosen to support the current liturgical season. Consequently, pupils' understanding of the Church's cycle of seasons and feasts is secure. In liaison with the parish priest, the religious education subject leader has recently introduced a wider variety of music for prayer and liturgy, enhancing the quality of worship experienced by pupils and staff. Parents are welcomed into school for assemblies, class Masses and liturgies. They value these opportunities to participate in the school's prayer life, and one parent commented, "Prayer, Mass and services at school are always so beautiful." Whilst pupils experience

a range of ways of praying, they have yet to experience a wider variety of prayer types, including meditation and quiet reflection.

Prayer areas throughout the school are of a high standard, as high priority is given to them by leaders. The school chapel is a central spiritual space where class Masses and prayer services are celebrated. Pupils also have the opportunity to walk to the Parish Church to celebrate Mass as a whole school on significant feast days. Staff feel well supported in developing their understanding of prayer through their training. Staff use the diocesan resources to promote pupils' planning and leadership of prayer and liturgy; consequently, pupils are familiar with the 'gather, listen, respond, go forth' model to structure their prayer. Governors regularly attend Mass and prayer services which provide regular opportunities to monitor and review prayer first-hand as part of their self-evaluation process, enabling them to determine the accuracy of other monitoring undertaken by the religious education subject leader. Their findings are used to inform improvement planning. However, pupils are not routinely involved in evaluating the quality of prayer and liturgy across the school in a planned and systematic way. The school's prayer policy does not specify a clear progression of skills appropriate to pupils' age and capability regarding the planning and delivery of prayer.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Michael's Catholic Primary Academy and Nursery
School unique reference number (URN)	139892
Full postal address of the school	Telford Gardens, Merry Hill, Wolverhampton, WV3 7LE
School phone number	01902 556368
Name of head teacher or principal	Adam Jewkes
Chair of governing board	Christopher Walker
School Website	www.stmichaels-academy.co.uk
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	St Francis & St Clare Catholic MAC
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Trustees	Archdiocese of Birmingham
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	November 2016
Previous denominational inspection grade	2

The inspection team

Bernadette Corbett

Lead inspector

Joanna McAleenan

Team inspector

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