



St Michael's Catholic Primary School

URN: 401264

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Archbishop of Cardiff-Menevia

11–12 March 2026

Summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

2

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

2

Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education

2

Collective worship (p.7)

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

2

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

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

Compliance statement

- The school is compliant in relation to the general norms for religious education laid down by the bishop's conference.
- The school has complied in relation to any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop.
- The school has complied in relation to the previous areas for improvement.

What the school does well

- Catholic life and mission are strengths of the school, shaping a faith-filled community, with a strong sense of belonging. Pupils and staff have positive relationships and pupil behaviour is good.
- Leaders, governors, and staff are dedicated and committed to the mission of the Church and work for its success.
- Members of the newly formed religious education (RE) team work with admirable zeal in their role.
- Prayer is central to school life; leaders see it as the key way to establish and promote the school's mission and values, reflected in the dedicated chapel and its use.
- The head teacher is a passionate advocate for her school and has worked tirelessly for its improvement.

What the school needs to improve

- Leaders to continue to facilitate planning, implementation, and assessment of the *Religious Education Directory*, focusing on differentiation to allow for a creative, independent approach in RE.
- Further embed leaders' monitoring work and self-evaluation with all stakeholders to foster a more accurate, shared understanding of where the school is and a clearer way forward to implement improvement.
- To further develop pupil planning, participation, and evaluation to strengthen worship across the school.

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

2

Provision

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

1

Leadership

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

2

2

The mission statement, 'Together with Christ, Together We Love, Together We Learn, Together We Live', is central to all aspects of school life. Pupils understand and value the distinctive Catholic identity of their school. Following a review of the school's vision in 2018, a new vision statement was developed by pupils, staff, governors, and parents: 'Faith, Action, Success'. This vision focuses on among other things, valuing the contribution of each member of the school family, parish, and wider community and working in partnership with home by supporting parents and carers as first educators. Pupils value the distinctive Catholic identity of their school and explore this through events such as the Autumn term mission and vision week. It allows pupils, staff, and the wider school community to develop an awareness of how the vision is known by all to shape the school and their lives. During the vision week, the school celebrates with a Mass for their patron saint and learns about their class saints. The Mini Vinnies group is at an early stage of development; however, it is committed to following the teaching and example of Jesus. Throughout the year, the school supports many different charities such as Cafod, as well as local charities, in this time of economic crisis, such as the Pontypridd Foodbank via St Dyfrig's and All Hallow Parish. Money is also raised through events such as the 'baby shower for Mary' at Christmas, with all items donated to the local baby bank. Pupils value the work of the parish priest who supports the school.

The shared vision is promoted by all. It is regularly revisited and known, lived, and witnessed. It has a significant impact on the life of the school, which excels at being a community. The school goes the extra mile to ensure quality relationships and a strong culture of welcome. This welcome was recognised in the recent Estyn report, and it helps pupils to develop a sense of belonging to their local community. The most vulnerable are helped in initiatives such as the school uniform store. Other cultures and religious traditions are celebrated. The school has clear policies in place, which ensure that pupils receive good pastoral care through nurture provision

and links with outside agencies. Staff provide the highest levels of pastoral care and a commitment to the most vulnerable, with most staff having received emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) training to support any young people who suffer bereavement and loss. The school environment is welcoming and reflects its Catholic mission and identity through displays, artefacts, and classroom prayer spaces. The school has made excellent use of the space it has with a dedicated chapel room and faith garden, and it has given care and attention to the quality of these spaces. The provision for relationships and sexuality education meets both statutory and diocesan requirements.

The development of Catholic life and mission of the school is viewed by leaders and governors as a core responsibility; leaders and governors promote the bishop's vision for the diocese. The head teacher is ably supported by her staff and the new RE team is deeply committed. However, the school would benefit from further development and embedding of leaders' monitoring work and self-evaluation to allow for a more accurate shared understanding of how the school is progressing. This would show a clearer way forward to implement improvement. The head teacher, staff, and governing body know their school well and are ambitious for the Catholic life and mission of the school, developing links with the local parish as part of this mission. There are strong home-school-parish links. Responses from the parent/carer questionnaire were overwhelmingly supportive of the school, with comments such as 'St Michael's helps in guiding my children to learn how to pray and understand the Catholic faith in a way that is meaningful to their age'. All leaders strategically take on board and respond to policies and training, and leaders and governors demonstrate respect for the dignity of workers. The school works well with the parish priest, and staff understand their responsibility in developing Catholic life. They are good role models and fully participate in activities which reflect the school's mission and ethos. For example, all staff, including new staff, take part in the New to Catholic Education Training, and non-Catholic staff follow the Cardiff Archdiocese religious education certificate course (CAREC).

Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade

Pupil outcomes

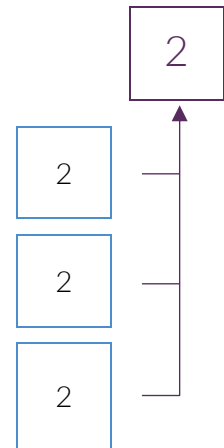
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

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



Pupils have positive attitudes and settle well to apply themselves to tasks in religious education (RE) lessons. Learners make good progress over time and develop secure age-appropriate knowledge, understanding, and skills that reflect Directory expectations. For example, pupils in Year 6 were observed showing an in depth understanding of Jesus’ death, from the Gospel of St John, and being able to explain the point of view from Jesus, the Chief priests, and Pontius Pilate. Standards in RE books are good and are comparable with literacy. Pupils relative to their age are becoming religiously literate; for example, pupils in Year 2 are able to talk about forgiveness and the stages of reconciliation, linking with their personal experiences in school and the school’s vision. Learning is enhanced using key vocabulary, as shown, for example, by Year 4 pupils discussing corporal and spiritual works of mercy and then completing a Lenten journey Journal to develop their ideas further. Pupils are able to reflect spiritually and think ethically and theologically, as shown by Year 5 pupils reflecting on what Catholic’s believe about heaven, giving their ideas first and then using scripture to clarify. Pupils produce good work that is presented well and shows signs of emerging creativity, as in Year 3’s work on Powerpoint presentations to explain and retell the words and prayer of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, for example. In many of the lessons observed, pupils’ behaviour was good.

All teachers demonstrate good levels of enthusiasm and commitment, with good subject knowledge leading to well-planned lessons. During the inspection, the best lessons included good questioning and good celebration of effort. To further develop RE teaching, the pace of lessons and differentiation needs to be further explored. For example, Year 5 would have benefited from access to Bibles for use in their work, rather than just the Bible quotes given, to find references to heaven. Pupils need to use a variety of different ways to channel their creativity and expression, for example through music, art, or dance. Teachers provide

opportunities for pupils to present their learning, but this is being constrained by the overuse of worksheets, inhibiting a creative and individual response. A creative curriculum needs to be encouraged further with a wide variety of tasks and active learning strategies across all classes, including role-play, art, debate, ICT, and dance. Also, opportunities for reflection of learning should be incorporated into lessons, and assessment systems need to be further developed to reflect the Directory outcomes and clearly track pupils' progress.

The head teacher, governors, and the RE team are committed to Catholic values and principles and these lie at the heart of their curriculum. They have ensured that the programme provided for RE satisfies all diocesan requirements. Their high level of commitment to the subject is clear, and RE benefits from investment that is on a par with that of other core subjects, for example, investment in resources to support teaching and learning in line with the Directory. Leaders ensure professional development is available for staff through diocesan training and cluster working. Staff regularly share best practice, which is beginning to develop a consistency across classes. The RE team attend all diocesan training. Self-evaluation, however, tends to be descriptive in nature and lacks strong analysis. A more rigorous monitoring system is needed to allow for all stakeholders to engage in a thorough self-evaluation process and challenge as required. This is needed to allow for accurate measures of progress to be made and for clear, evidence-based targets to be identified for future improvement.

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

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

2

At St Michael's, collective worship is an integral part of school life, and pupils respond positively to the opportunities provided. Several different forms of worship and ways praying were observed during the inspection. Pupils gathered with reverence, listened intently, and sang joyfully the dedicated school hymn, which the school has composed. Evaluation of prayer and worship is in the early stages, and greater pupil participation would strengthen worship across the school. Pupils understand that the school community is committed to following the teaching of Jesus as expressed in the Gospels. Examples include the Sunday attendance at Mass and the crafting of 'get well' cards to send to the children's hospital. Pupils of all ages display the confidence to pray; however, this would be further developed by the use of spontaneous and traditional prayers. Pupils interviewed were able to talk about their participation in prayer and liturgical celebrations, and the difference this has made to their own spiritual development. This was reflected when a child commented, "I enjoy sharing my knowledge and understanding about the bible stories." Throughout the school, pupils take part in daily meditation after lunch and Examen prior to going home. Pupils demonstrate respect for themselves and others, participating voluntarily at lunch times in the Wednesday Word prayer group.

Prayer is central to the life of the school; it is at the heart of every school celebration and is viewed by leaders as the most important vehicle for establishing and promoting the school's mission and values. It underpins their sense of community and belonging. Staff including senior leaders offer good practice and support other staff and pupils as participants in and leaders of prayer and liturgy. Prayer bags that were blessed by the parish priest during the Feast of St Michael in 2024 are used by each class. All classes have prayer corners that have a likeness to each other; however, more focus needs to be given to resources in classes to provide greater opportunities for a more cohesive approach to class worship and spontaneous prayer. There is

a clear focus on providing good opportunities through its prayer life for pupils to develop spiritually, including daily acts of worship and prayers at key points of the day. The liturgical seasons of the Church year are given prominence in the planning of worship.

Leaders and governors offer regular opportunities for the professional development of all staff. As an example, governors attended recent diocesan training on prayer and have fed back to staff. Leadership and governance at the school show a strong ability to build on current practice, with a clear commitment to embedding and strengthening collective worship at the heart of school life. The liturgical seasons of the Church year are given prominence in the planning of worship. Feast days are marked in the life of the school and whole-school Masses are celebrated for special occasions such as the Leavers Mass. This gives pupils a real experience of the Church within the school. Leaders understand a variety of ways of praying and the importance of prayer and liturgy when allocating resources, such as investment in the chapel, the remembrance bench, and the Garden of Faith 2023. In terms of the quality and significance of collective worship in school, leaders gather the views of pupils, staff, parents, and carers through questionnaires; however, it needs to be further embedded in the school curriculum using evaluation, observation of good practice, and training in conjunction with the diocese.

Information about the school

Full name of school	St Michael's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	401264
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	6743312
Full postal address of the school	John Place, Treforest, Pontypridd, Rhondda Cynon Taff, CF37 1SP
School phone number	01443486840
Executive headteacher	Not applicable
Headteacher	Joanna Taylor
Chair of governors	Kathryn Thomas
School Website	www.stmichaelstreforest.co.uk
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Not applicable
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Voluntary Aided School
Admissions policy	Non-selective
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Not applicable
Date of last denominational inspection	11 – 14 June 2018
Previous denominational inspection grade	UU

The inspection team

Juliet Stack	Lead
Julie Beaumont-Rees	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