

Archdiocese of Cardiff Inspection Report



Saint Michael's Catholic Primary School Pontypridd

Inspection dates	11 – 14 June 2018
Reporting Inspector	Miss Catherine Power
Accompanying Inspector	Mrs Jacqueline Phillips
Type of school	Primary
Age range of pupils	3-11
Number on roll	231
Local Authority	Rhondda Cynon Taff
Chair of Governors	Mrs Emma Pope
School Address	John Place Treforest, Pontypridd CF37 1SP
Tel. no.	01443 486840
Email address	Admin.StMichaelsPrimary@rctcbc.gov.uk
Parishes served	St Dyfrig's, Treforest All Hallows, Miskin St Thomas's, Abercynon
Date of previous inspection	19 – 21 September 2011
Headteacher	Mr Mark Chapple

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the Archdiocese of Cardiff and Inspection of denominational education under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on prospects for improvement.

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice or practise that is both consistent and highly effective.
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The table below shows the terms that Archdiocesan inspectors use and a broad idea of their meaning. It is for guidance only.

Proportion	Description
With very few exceptions	Nearly all
90% or more	Most
70% or more	Many
60% or more	A majority
Close to 50%	Half/around half
Below 40%	A minority
Below 20%	Few
Less than 10%	Very few

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Archdiocesan Schools website: www.rcadcschools.org

Context

St Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School is a Voluntary Aided school in the trusteeship of the Archdiocese of Cardiff. The school is located in the village of Treforest and serves families in the parishes of St Dyfrig's, Treforest, All Hallows, Miskin and parts of St Thomas, Abercynon. Many pupils travel to school by bus. St Michael's has a large catchment area, which includes Bedlinog, Trelewis, Edwardsville, Nelson, Cilfynydd, Pontypridd, Glyncoch, Ynysybwl, Church Village, Beddau, Llantrisant, Dolau, Pontyclun, Miskin, Talbot Green, Efail Isaf, Creigiau, Pentyrch, Gwaelod y Garth, Tŷ Rhiw and Tongwynlais.

The school is located in the Rhondda Cynon Taff Local Authority and has good links with the University of South Wales. The school's intake of pupils is drawn from varied backgrounds, with the majority of pupils coming from homes which are neither economically advantaged nor disadvantaged.

There are currently 231 pupils on roll. 60% are baptised Catholics, 21% belong to other Christian denominations, 7% are from other world religions and 12% have no religious affiliation. 10% of pupils at the school have additional educational needs (ALN) and 13% receive free school meals, which is below the average for Wales. No pupils have English as an additional language or Welsh as their first language.

The school currently employs 7 teachers, 3 of whom are Catholic. 57% of support staff are Catholic. No members of staff hold the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.

St Michael's is an Eco School and has been awarded the Green Flag and in 2017 won the 'Love where you live' award in Pontypridd.

The previous Section 50 Inspection was conducted in 2011.

Summary

How effective is the school in providing Catholic education?	Unsatisfactory
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- The action points from the previous inspection have not been effectively addressed and still remain areas of concern. Consequently, there has been a steady decline in the teaching of Religious Education and pupil outcomes.
- The requirement by the Bishops' Conference for 10% of time spent teaching Religious Education is not fulfilled.
- Leaders and governors are unaware of the strengths and weaknesses in both the outcomes and provision for Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school. They have not engaged effectively in systematic monitoring and evaluation.
- The school's own judgements in the Self Evaluation about the quality of teaching and learning and standards of children's work are not accurate and do not have appropriate supporting evidence.
- Opportunities for staff to receive professional development in curriculum Religious Education or the planning of prayer and collective worship are limited.
- Nearly all lessons observed were unsatisfactory. Teachers do not understand how to use the "Come and See" Religious Education programme effectively to meet the needs of all pupils.

What are the school prospects for improvement?	Unsatisfactory
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The school's prospects for improvement are unsatisfactory because:

- Leaders do not have the capacity to bring about the urgent improvements needed. The school is limited by inconsistencies in staffing, particularly in having too few Catholic staff.
- The School Self Evaluation is ineffective and does not result in a clear development plan for Religious Education or the Catholic life of the school which is shared and understood by governors and the whole school community.
- The school does not currently have sufficient internal staff expertise to lead professional development for staff and plan for improvement.

Recommendations and Required Actions

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Recommendation 1: Governors should:

- Ensure that the correct time allocation is given to Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- Establish rigorous procedures to monitor, evaluate and review the Catholic life of the school and curriculum Religious Education.
- Appoint a Senior Leader for Religious Education who, together with the headteacher and link governor for Religious Education, would be accountable for leading the systematic monitoring, evaluation and review processes of the Catholic life of the school and curriculum Religious Education.
- Hold leaders and all staff to account through the Performance Management process.
- Support and challenge the school in its implementation of Archdiocesan initiatives eg introduction of the Pupil Profile.

Recommendation 2: Leaders and Managers should:

- Ensure that strategic forward planning for the Catholic life of the school and curriculum Religious Education has a clear expectation of outcomes, success criteria and timescales and is supported by rigorous monitoring and evaluation involving governors in the process.
- Demonstrate a strategic effort and an excellent working partnership to move the school forward.
- Draw up an Improvement plan for Religious Education, the Catholic life of the school and Collective Worship with appropriate priorities, tasks and timescales aimed at improving the quality of outcomes and provision across the school.
- Raise teacher expectations and improve the quality of teaching across the school in order to accelerate pupils' progress and enable them to achieve age related expectations or above.
- Set up rigorous systems for pupil tracking and classroom observation in Religious Education and Collective Worship.
- Improve teachers' specialist knowledge of Religious Education by providing ongoing training, supported in-house and opportunities to attend Archdiocesan courses and liaise with other schools.

- Improve the quality of the prayer life provided by the school by ensuring that all staff receive appropriate training in how to develop and support pupils' prayer life so that the majority of pupils are skilled and equipped in leading prayer.
- Fully implement Archdiocesan initiatives eg Christian Meditation and the Pupil Profile.

Recommendation 3: Teachers should:

- Ensure that 10% of all taught time is spent on classroom Religious Education.
- Implement the Archdiocesan Religious Education programme, "Come and See", effectively by ensuring that all lessons have pace and challenge, that pupil tasks and activities are suitably differentiated with "driver words" and meet the abilities of all learners including more able pupils and those with additional learning needs.
- Develop pedagogy to provide exciting, stimulating activities that will engage all pupils in their learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching to ensure that all lessons are at least good with excellent features.
- Ensure consistency in marking and feedback so that pupils know how well they are doing and are provided with clear steps for improvement.
- Fully participate in both internal and external standardisation and moderation processes to develop a more accurate understanding of pupils' levels of attainment.
- Implement Archdiocesan initiatives in prayer and worship eg Christian Meditation and provide opportunities for pupils to become skilled in pupil-initiated acts of worship

What happens next?

The school will submit a Post-Inspection Action Plan to the Director of Religious Education that shows how it will address the recommendations. Submission should be within 45 working days of publication of the report. Progress in addressing the recommendations will be monitored by the Archdiocese.

Main Findings

KQ1.How good are outcomes?

Unsatisfactory

Pupils at St Michael's are in the early stages of their journey towards becoming religiously literate and engaged young people.

Most pupils throughout the school have an age appropriate understanding of the liturgical feast and seasons of the Church, they can retell simple stories from scripture and have a basic understanding of the Mass. A majority of pupils can compose simple prayers, recite traditional prayers and can pray using the Welsh language. Most pupils are able to use some religious language and are beginning to make links between faith and life but this is ad hoc and inconsistent across both Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2.

Classes across the school do not devote the required 10% of teaching time to classroom. This has resulted in a negative impact being made on pupil outcomes and a significant decline in standards since the last Inspection.

The school follows the "Come and See," Religious Education programme. Learning focus tasks or activities are not followed consistently e.g. in lower Key Stage 2 whole units of work on Pentecost and the Sacrament of Reconciliation have not been taught. This hinders pupil progress significantly. Responses in pupils' books indicate that their ability to think spiritually and ethically, to make links to their own lives and offer their personal response to what they believe is underdeveloped.

Evidence from classes across the school indicates that pupils have too few opportunities to make progress and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in Religious Education due to the lack of teaching time devoted to the subject. This has a negative impact on outcomes. Learning objectives are unclear and scant attention is given across the school to the use of driver words or the need to match tasks to pupils differing abilities. Work in pupils' books shows inconsistencies in teachers marking with too few opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback or employ peer- or self-assessment strategies. Many pupils across the school are unclear about the progress they are making. Pupils are unaware of their targets in Religious Education and are given limited, if any guidance from teachers on how to improve their work. For a few pupils Religious Education is perceived as boring. This results in low-level disruption throughout lessons. Low teacher expectations, a lack of subject knowledge and the failure to plan and deliver classroom Religious Education appropriately has resulted in underperformance from most pupils especially when given their starting points and capabilities.

Many pupils understand some of the elements that make a Catholic school distinctive and with prompting can articulate the school's mission statement. Pupils understand that helping others within the wider community and the local community is important. This is illustrated through the schools active involvement with the Bee Friendly planting scheme and the willingness to raising funds for

Velindre hospital by 'wearing red for Wales', and supporting the Save the Children Christmas jumper day. Pupils participate in a range of activities to support the Catholic life of the school.

They are keen to take responsibility through their elected representatives on the Senedd, Eco Committee and Criw Cymreig. These committees meet regularly under the direction of the Religious Education leader. Members of the school Senedd have suggested playground improvements and select charities for fundraising; these opportunities help pupils to gain important skills. Pupils involvement in a range of energy-saving initiatives and recycling projects has led to the school winning the challenge of the year in the 2017 Pontypridd "Love where you live" awards.

Teacher-designed prayer areas and prayer foci are evident throughout the school, however, their impact on encouraging prayer or creating a sacred space is limited due to a lack of ownership by pupils.

The school supports Sacramental catechesis in the parish and pupils visit the parish church for the celebration of Mass. Parents and parishioners support the school through their attendance at assemblies, liturgies and Masses e.g. most recently the Ascension Day Mass and the May Procession, they value the support that the school offers for pupils' spiritual development.

Whilst pupils respond with respect to Collective Worship, they are often passive and rely heavily on adults to arrange and plan for it. They are given little opportunity to develop skills in leading Collective Worship, and much of what they experience is lacking in innovation and interest, and fails to capture the joy and excitement of high quality worship. Recent Archdiocesan initiatives e.g. the Examen or Christian meditation have not been fully implemented at the school. As a result opportunities to develop prayer and collective worship across the school are underdeveloped.

KQ2. How good is provision?	Unsatisfactory
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The quality of teaching at St Michael's requires improvement, with nearly all lessons observed judged unsatisfactory. Generally, teaching across the school lacks sufficient pace and is repetitive. In many lessons, teaching lacks inspiration and so does not engage pupils. It lacks variety and challenge and differentiation is by outcome only. Teachers need to raise their expectations, improve the quality of teaching across the school, and provide exciting, stimulating activities to engage all pupils in their learning and raise standards.

During the inspection, nearly all lessons observed began with talk strategies and when used effectively e.g. 'Babble Gabble' in year 6, and 'talk partners' in Reception, enhanced pupils learning, however in many classes it lasted far too long and had no impact on learning. There are few examples of engaging activities in the Reception class where pupils wrote a recipe for a friendship soup and made friendship bracelets. Teaching assistants joined in the action songs and supported the learning.

The standard of work in Religious Education books is unsatisfactory. Evidence in books indicates that pupils have too few opportunities to make progress and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in Religious Education due to the lack of teaching time devoted to the subject. Some classes had fewer than 10 pieces of written work as evidence of coverage of units since September and there are too few opportunities for children to practice extended writing in Religious Education.

Planning is insufficiently geared to the needs of all pupils and takes little account of prior learning. The school do not use the driver words effectively to plan appropriate tasks matched to pupils' abilities. There is an over dependency on the use of worksheets which limit pupils outcomes. The quality of marking is inconsistent across the school and does not inform pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Work in pupils' books shows inconsistencies in teachers marking with too few opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback or employ peer- or self-assessment strategies.

In some classes, teaching assistants are deployed appropriately to support pupils who are more vulnerable, however, their role could be further developed to maximise learning opportunities and support independent learning. At times pupils are over directed and this hinders their progress.

There are few cross-curricular opportunities and few pupils have opportunities to use Information Technology within their Religious Education lessons. Pupils in upper KS2 used 'book creator' to respond to pictures to say how they could help the homeless.

Teachers plan using the grid provided by the Archdiocese; this does create the opportunity to develop practice in the recommended way; however there is an inconsistency across the school. No other World Religions were taught across the whole school this year. All staff would benefit from attending the Diocesan 'Come and See' training to ensure a whole-school approach to planning and delivery of all topics.

Currently the school does not have an accurate picture of pupil achievement. Recent topic assessments do not match the judgements of the inspectors. Assessment arrangements do not make an impact on standards or pupil progress. Teachers record end-of-topic assessment results, however, these are not collated or analysed effectively. As a result, opportunities for leaders and governors to have a thorough understanding and grasp of pupils' rates of progress by class or groups of learners are missed. There is no pupil tracking system in place in the school to present an accurate view of each pupil's current performance and progress over time. There are no portfolios of moderated and levelled work. The Bishops' Conference requirements, statutory requirements and diocesan requirements are not met in nearly all classes.

The school has sufficient resources to support Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school. During the inspection, one whole school act of Collective Worship was observed. This followed the traditional structure and included Welsh prayers. The two Foundation Phase teacher-led liturgies were

held in the chapel, and pupils participated by joining in prayers and singing. The use of the chapel in promoting prayer and worship is under-developed as a resource at the school.

Pupils say prayers at key points throughout the day e.g. before and after meals. However, prayer in all classes needs to be further developed, to allow an atmosphere in which prayer can deepen. Acts of pupil-led or pupil-prepared opportunities for prayer and reflection were not observed during inspection.

There is evidence of acts of worship with the local parish. These provide opportunities for pupils and adults to pray together e.g., pupils and parents spoke of the May Procession recently held at St Dyfrig's as a joyous celebration for the community. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their residential weekend with other Catholic schools as part of the transition to the High School. This was a highlight for pupils and an opportunity for them to share their faith with others.

KQ3. How good are leadership and management?	Unsatisfactory
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Leaders and governors have, over the years, been supportive of the Catholic life of the school and curriculum Religious Education. Governors are visible in the school and undertake learning walks for religious education however; they have not received regular reports from school leaders about the provision and outcomes in Religious Education. This lack of information has prevented them from engaging appropriately in the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the school's Catholic life and Religious Education. As a result action points from the last inspection have not been effectively addressed and still remain areas of concern, the 10% requirement by the Bishops' Conference for time spent teaching Religious Education is not fulfilled consequently there has been a steady decline in standards.

The school culture of self-evaluation and improvement planning with regard to Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school is underdeveloped. The recently written self-evaluation for Religious Education is not an accurate reflection of the school's performance. Appropriate time has not been made available for the Religious Education leader or senior staff to undertake a full range of monitoring activities over a period. The lack of evidence from class observations, book scrutiny or listening to learners to support judgements made by the school highlights the fact that staff and governors are unaware of the strengths and weaknesses in both Religious Education and the Catholic life of the school. The recently written action plan therefore does not identify appropriate priorities for improvement. The Action Plan has not been agreed by governors or shared with staff.

There is a clear lack of infrastructure to support the school staff in the areas of learning and teaching in Religious Education and the development of Catholic life. These areas are currently solely dependent on the leader for Religious Education who in addition to full-time teaching responsibilities leads a number of other curriculum areas and pupil voice groups. Without leadership time or opportunities to contribute to internal training programmes, the Religious Education leader has not been able to disseminate important messages from Archdiocesan meetings

eg the introduction of Christian meditation or the implementation of the Pupil Profile. Opportunities for internal training or the sharing of good practice have not been made available to staff. This has resulted in teachers not fully understanding how to deliver the 'Come and See' Religious Education programme effectively, to plan appropriate tasks for pupils or to assess their progress across the school accurately. Overall, professional development opportunities for teachers and learning support assistants and processes for staff induction to help develop understanding and commitment to the Church's mission in education are unsatisfactory.

Partnerships with other schools and community organisations are developing well. The school joins annually with Cardinal Newman High School and its other partner schools to moderate pupils' work. These meetings are helpful in ensuring that the levels awarded to pupils are accurate. Pupils from St Michael's School also join with other primary schools in their Catholic Cluster to enjoy an annual outward-bound trip. This provides pupils with opportunities to develop skills across a range of adventurous activities and to meet and make new friends before their transfer to High School. Staff at St Michael's are also working with other Catholic primary schools in the cluster to develop outdoor learning provision. These planned activities contribute to pupil wellbeing.

The parish priest is a regular and welcome visitor to the school; he is supportive of the work of the school and values the school's contributions to the parish. He supports the staff pastorally and celebrates Masses with the school community. Parents and parishioners enjoy school celebrations in St Dyfrig's church. As one parent commented, "We appreciate being able to attend Mass and other services at the school and at St Dyfrig's, it's good that the parish are invited to join with the school." The recent May Procession was enjoyed by parents and pupils proving to be a wonderful way to show devotion to our Lady.

School staff also work to develop links with the local community taking part in a number of events e.g. the University of South Wales Carol Service and the 'Can Actol' performance, based on welcoming refugees to Wales, at the Urdd Eisteddfod in Pencoed and at the music festival in Treorchy.

Pupils are also encouraged to help and support others by fundraising for local charities. Charities supported this year include fundraising for the Syrian Refugee Children in Pontypridd, 'Lots of socks' to raise awareness and money for the Downs Syndrome Association and CAFOD. Pupils were particularly pleased with the successful non-uniform day which enabled them to donate 98.3kg of food to Pontypridd Foodbank. Another particularly successful initiative is the link with Bukalasi Primary School in Mbale. This enables pupils to develop an understanding of the wider world and their role as global citizens.

The school also benefits from a very enthusiastic parent-teachers association. This committee works hard throughout the year to organise events for both parents and pupils. These events e.g. The Welcome evening, class Christmas card competition, spooky disco, film night, tombola non uniform day, Christmas fayre, Christmas raffle, Valentines disco, spring fayre, summer fete, bingo coffee mornings enabling classes to showcase their work and 'breakfast with Santa'.

Funds raised at these events enable the school to purchase new netball kit, resources and costumes for the Urdd Club. These events are also successful in helping to develop a sense of community amongst parents and pupils.

Appendix 1

Responses to parent questionnaires

Eighteen questionnaires were received. The majority of these were positive in nature.

Common references were made to:

- The school's educational, social and religious values.
- The schools Catholic ethos, Christian values.
- The welcoming and friendly staff.
- The caring and supportive nature of the teaching staff.
- Strong transition links with the High School.
- The sense of family at the school.
- Close links with the parish

A few parents have stated that they would like to have more information about their child's progress in Religious Education.

Appendix 2

Evidence Base

- Whole school act of worship
- Class-based acts of worship in the chapel
- Foci for prayer and reflection
- Observations of lessons in all classes
- Playtime, lunchtime routines
- Teachers' Planning
- Evidence of Assessments
- Pupil tracking
- Use of IT
- Deployment of learning support assistants
- Samples of pupils' workbooks
- Photographic evidence
- Quality and range of available resources.
- All policies linked to Religious Education
- Religious Education Leader job description
- Religious Education planning for improvement - Action Plan

- Religious Education Self Evaluation Document
- School Self Evaluation Document, Action Plan and other relevant documentation
- Discussion with the chair and foundation governors
- Discussion with the Religious Education Co-ordinator
- Meeting with parents
- Listening to learners
- Meeting with the school Pupil Voice groups
- Observation of school routines
- Attendance at extra-curricular activities e.g. athletics training