

Introduction

This inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

The report of the inspection is produced for the Archbishop of Liverpool (Code of Canon Law 804 and 806) and for the governors of the school.

The inspectors are members of the Christian Education Department and their associates approved by the Archbishop of Liverpool for this purpose.

Information about the school

St. Michael's school is an average sized Catholic Primary School situated in Widnes and mainly serving the parish of St. Michael's. There are 237 children on roll of whom 177 are baptised Catholic, 60 come from other Christian denominations, and there are no pupils from other faith or religious traditions. There are 11 teachers of whom 11 teach Religious Education. Nine are Catholic and 9 teachers have a suitable qualification in religious education. Since the last inspection there has been no significant change in personnel.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

Inspection Judgements

**Overall effectiveness:
how effective the school is in providing Catholic Education**

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main Findings:-

The school is outstanding in providing Catholic Education. There is a clear vision for Catholic Education which is embraced by the whole school community. Since the last inspection the school has securely maintained and built on previously good performance. Self Evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. There is no significant difference in performance between groups of pupils. Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are outstanding. The school is successful in addressing the areas it has identified for improvement. The leadership team is deeply motivated and consistently communicates its high expectations to staff in order to secure further improvement. Staff are constantly affirmed and very well supported. Teachers are provided with in-service to support their ongoing development. Realistic and challenging plans stem from the accurate analysis obtained through monitoring and are being used effectively to improve outcomes. Any underperformance is challenged.

The school has outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What the school needs to do to improve further

- Enhance provision further by:
 - implementing the planned development of the assessment strategies, tracking and reporting which is already in place.
- Help teachers and support staff to develop an adult understanding of the topics by:
 - once again making use of the Before you Begin section of the programme.
- Further enhance the provision for the teaching of other faiths and religions by:
 - considering visits to places of worship and inviting speakers into school for the already successful other faiths days.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils

Pupils' achievement in Religious Education is outstanding. On entry to school many children have a limited or no knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith. Pupils' attainment in Religious Education is outstanding. Pupils make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Analysis of assessments undertaken provides evidence of pupils generally attaining levels above that expected for their age and stage of development especially in Key Stage 2. There is no difference in performance between pupils of different

gender. Outcomes for pupils with additional or special needs are outstanding. Pupils are becoming increasingly more religiously literate. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developing appropriate to their age or capacity. They are developing the skills that enable them to think spiritually, ethically and theologically and are becoming more aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. Any underachievement is challenged. Pupils are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively. Pupils' enjoyment of their learning is outstanding as shown by their interest, enthusiasm and behaviour. Pupils are actively involved in developing and evaluating the Catholic character of the school by their care and respect for each other and by their involvement the review and living out of the Mission Statement, in Collective Worship, the school council, peer mentors and peer massage. Pupils' have an outstanding sense of belonging to the school community and value and respect others. Pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility in the school and wider community as seen above. Pupils benefit from participation in away days and retreat activities especially in Robinwood and the other residential's that are organised and where Collective Worship is very much part of the experience. Pupils are considerate and caring of others both in school and the wider community. Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong and apply this in their personal relationships. Education for personal relationships has fostered positive attitudes in pupils. Pupils take an increasing responsibility for themselves and their actions. They praise and acknowledge the contribution of others. They show a readiness to embrace and celebrate their lived experiences.

Pupils are outstanding in responding to and participating in the schools Collective Worship. They are becoming increasingly more confident in preparing and leading worship from their earliest years. They act with reverence and are keen to participate in a variety of gatherings. They sing joyfully, reflect in silence and join in community prayers appropriately and with confidence. No-one is expected to act in a manner contrary to their beliefs and all show mutual respect. Pupils' knowledge of prayer and liturgy is increasing. They are becoming familiar with a variety of prayer styles. They appreciate and are open to the Word of God in the scriptures.

How good outcomes are for individuals and groups of pupils	
How well pupils achieve in Religious Education	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupils' standards of attainment in Religious Education 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of pupils' learning and their progress in Religious Education 	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school	1
How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship	1

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education

The quality of teaching is consistently effective in ensuring that pupils are interested and engaged and make outstanding progress. Teachers take into account pupils' prior learning and ensure differentiated tasks when planning so that the work consolidates, builds on and extends their knowledge and understanding. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work independently and collaboratively. Outstanding use is made of time and resources: IWB

(particularly video footage and DVD's), Rejoice hymns, cameras & photographs, story, puppets, personal memorabilia, journals, calming music and the outdoor area. Teachers and other adults use a variety of strategies to sustain and motivate pupils: very creative use of the Here I Am programme, talking partners, role play, dance & movement, calming music, interviews, the child being the teacher with the 'Golden Tube', time for reflection, affirmation and cross curricular links. Pupils are informed of their progress and how to improve both orally and through marking which is being developed throughout the school. They are given opportunities to discuss their work and progress.

The assessment of pupils work in Religious Education is being developed and teachers are becoming more confident with this work. The school has good assessment strategies in place which provide accurate and detailed information on the achievement of all the pupils. Teachers are able to identify how well pupils are achieving and tackle underachievement. Teachers enable pupils to evaluate their own work. Formal assessment tasks are undertaken in line with Archdiocesan guidance. Assessment information is collated by the subject leader and shared with the leadership team and governors. Achievement and effort are celebrated. Pupils are constantly affirmed, know how well they are doing and know what they need to do to improve further.

The curriculum is outstanding in meeting pupils' needs. The school using the Here I Am programme recommended by the Archdiocese meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. A whole school approach is used and appropriate levels of the programme are being followed in different classes. This ensures complete Religious Education entitlement for each child and meets National and Archdiocesan requirements. Of the total curriculum time 10% is allocated to Religious Education. This fulfils the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales. Planning ensures full coverage of the Religious Education programme. Imaginative and well planned strategies are deployed to enrich pupils learning. Curriculum outlines are provided for parents. The school implements new curriculum developments as appropriate. Enrichment activities such as the after school clubs, and above all the choir, have a positive impact on the curriculum. The Religious Education curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development of all.

The Collective Worship provided is outstanding in reflecting the Catholic character of the school and taking into account the variety of Faith backgrounds among the pupils. Collective Worship plays a key part in meeting the Spiritual needs of the pupils. Opportunities are provided to enable full, active and conscious participation of the whole school community. Children are enabled to pray formally and informally. The school has provided opportunities for Staff to develop the skills in planning and leading Collective Worship. The teachers are providing the necessary resources and opportunities to help children to develop the skills necessary to plan, lead and participate in Collective Worship. Outstanding opportunities are provided for parents and carers to participate in a variety of celebrations of the Here I Am programme and the Church's liturgical year.

How effective the provision is for Catholic Education	
The quality of teaching and purposeful learning in Religious Education	1
The effectiveness of assessment in Religious Education	1
The extent to which the Religious Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	1
The quality of Collective Worship provided by the school	1

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the schools

Leaders and managers are outstanding in promoting and developing the Catholic life of the school and show an outstanding understanding of and commitment to the Mission of the Church. This is reflected in the Schools own Mission Statement. All who form part of the school community including the children were involved in the recent development and review of the Mission Statement. Its aims and practical objectives direct and guide every aspect of school life and are a useful tool by which the school can evaluate its effectiveness. Outstanding opportunities are provided for the staff and pupils to play an active part in Catholic life and Mission of the school through their respectful treatment of all, their involvement in Collective Worship and sacramental preparation and their involvement in the in-service in the Widnes pastoral area. The Self Evaluation Document provides evidence of the schools monitoring, searching analysis and self challenge. Their analysis provides a basis to celebrate the schools strengths and outline areas for development. The Self Evaluation Document is thorough and comprehensive though modest in its judgements. It is obviously having a great impact on the Catholic life of the school. The school provides outstanding induction and in-service training to enable staff to further understand the Church's Mission in Education and to play their unique part in it. . A range of opportunities for Spiritual and Moral developments are provided for staff and pupils such as the Widnes in-service. These enable an outstanding response from staff

Leaders and managers are outstanding in the way they use monitoring data to evaluate the schools performance, celebrate, and plan future improvements. The quality of planning, monitoring is outstanding. The subject leader leads and manages the subject in an outstanding way and is outstanding in guiding Religious Education. She shows exceptional commitment and introduces new initiatives when appropriate. Excellent documentation guides and directs all staff in the delivery of the subject. This is updated as necessary.

Governors are outstanding in fulfilling their responsibilities. Their collective talents and skills have effectively helped to shape the direction of the school. They are obviously very passionate about the school and are committed to improving standards, especially those concerned with the Religious Education curriculum and the Catholic life of the school.

Leadership at all levels respects difference, values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all. Prayer, worship and the liturgical life of the school reflects and respects the religious diversity within the school. There are positive relationships at every level within the school. Reverence and respect for people of other faiths and religions is encouraged through other faiths days. Parents are

consulted regularly and involved in a variety of ways in the life of the school. They are being encouraged to attend Here I Am rejoice assemblies which they appear to value and get great benefit from them. The use of the 'Here I am' programme promotes community cohesion. Parents are always very welcome in school and teachers are always available in the playground at the end of the day. Links have been set up with schools in Peru and with children from Chernobyl who have visited the school. Children have explored the beliefs and values of other faiths and religions particularly Judaism & Sikhism. This helps to promote tolerance and respect for those who think differently. The provision for the teaching of other faiths could be improved by exploring the possibility of inviting speakers into school and organising visits to places of worship.

How effective leaders and managers are in developing the Catholic Life of the School	
How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education and plan and implement improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
The extent to which the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the Catholic dimension of the school so areas needing development are addressed decisively and responsibilities met	1
How effectively leaders and managers promote community cohesion	1