



St Michael's Catholic Academy

Beamish Road, Billingham, Cleveland, TS23 3DX

School Unique Reference Number: **139656**

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| Inspection dates: | 01 – 02 February 2018 |
| Lead inspector: | Joe Linden |
| Team inspector: | Meg Baines |

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| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | This inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
| Catholic Life: | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Collective Worship: | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Religious Education: | | Good | 2 |

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

St Michael's Catholic Academy is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- The Catholic Life of St Michael's is at the heart of this happy and vibrant community. The essence of the school is to place Jesus at the centre. The governing body and headteacher lead by example ensuring that the Gospel message guides their decisions. They have a clear vision for the school which is firmly rooted within the Gospel. Central to the school is the beautiful chapel which enhances, enriches and inspires the whole community. The strong Catholic ethos is enhanced further through the effective links with the local parish community and feeder schools. Relationships on all levels are a real strength of St Michael's, contributing to the success of the school. Pupils are actively involved in many roles, leading liturgies, assemblies and organising charity groups. They are keen to extend their contribution even further.
- Collective Worship is outstanding and is highly regarded by all members of the community. Prayer plays a central part in the daily routine of school life for each pupil and member of staff. The weekly class Mass is valued enormously by pupils. The chapel is at the heart of the school physically and spiritually. Assemblies and services linked to the liturgical seasons have a real impact on most pupils, especially when they are directly involved.
- Religious Education is good. Achievement across school is strong with GCSE results close to the national average. The enthusiasm and dedication of the staff ensures that pupils enjoy their learning. Teaching is at least good and often outstanding. Governors ensure that leaders effectively monitor the provision of Religious Education in the drive to accelerate progress.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

- St Michael's is an average sized Catholic secondary school located in Billingham.
- The school converted to academy status in September 2013 (Carmel Education Trust).
- Pupils come from a range of social and economic backgrounds from Billingham, Norton and Wynyard.
- The proportion of pupils entitled to pupil premium is at the national average. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs is below the national average.
- A new head of Religious Education took up post in September 2017.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

■ Raise attainment at key stage four by continuing:

- to eradicate any gaps in progress of underperforming groups of pupils.
- to make full use of the standardisation process of assessment across the multi-academy trust (MAT).
- to support the recently appointed head of department.

■ Strengthen chaplaincy provision by:

- ensuring that pupil leaders are ably supported in planning, delivering and evaluating acts of Collective Worship.
- further developing the role of the lay chaplain under the guidance of The Carmel Education Trust chaplaincy coordinator.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- Pupils are very happy at St Michael's. They are great ambassadors for their school and hold the headteacher and staff in very high regard. Pupils recognise and are proud to be a member of a Catholic community. They feel that they can play an active part within the school and relish the opportunity to accept responsibility and actively seek to be of service to others.
- Pupil led liturgy, open to the whole community, is held weekly during morning break in the chapel. Year eight pupils have also led assemblies across the school for Remembrance Day and during Advent. A recently established Youth SVP group is thriving in year seven and already involved in charitable events.
- Governors, staff and pupils all spoke highly regarding the annual walk of witness and the May procession. These celebrations have impacted positively upon the wider community of Billingham. Local parishioners, pupils and their families raised £39,000 towards the cost of building and furnishing the chapel, which is central to school life. The weekly class Mass is planned and prepared by pupils with chaplaincy support. Pupils always take active roles and are admired by their peers for this. They enjoy writing their own prayers. Pupils spoke very highly of their own involvement in Holy Week services within school. Pupils admire the local parish priest very highly. They appreciate his frequent visits to the school.
- The behaviour of pupils within school is excellent. They respect one another and are polite and courteous to visitors. They are keen to share their experiences. They feel that staff listen to their suggestions and they actively seek to assume roles of responsibility in school. They are confident that any inappropriate behaviour preventing learning during lessons is dealt with firmly but fairly. Pupils recognise the role the Good Shepherd and the Emmaus centres play for those experiencing any difficulties within school.
- Pupils have raised over £5,000 for charities such as CAFOD, the Bradley Lowery charity, the Billingham foodbank, the NSPCC, Water Aid, Pearl of Africa, and Zoe's Place. Pupils also sent off 270 shoeboxes at Christmas. The year ten pupils also raised £7,000 through a sportathon for Meningitis UK. Pupils operate a Fair Trade stall weekly.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- Clearly visible in school and in many publications are the words of Micah, "Act justly, walk humbly and love tenderly". These values are lived out within the community. The school is a place of care and compassion where restorative justice is a reality. Pupils are welcomed, extremely well cared for and supported when things are difficult.
- The strong pastoral system, the Emmaus centre and Good Shepherd centre ensures pupils who require additional support feel there is always guidance and support available when they need it most. Pupils appreciate the counselling and restorative meetings which help them move forward in life and make the gospel message of reconciliation a reality.
- A well thought out personal, social and health education programme, which reflects the Catholic identity of the school, helps to prepare pupils to make a positive contribution to society. The relationships and sex education programme is sensitively designed and reflects the Church's teaching. The school is a Stonewall Champion.
- Safeguarding and early help assessments are given the highest priority in school and staff are fully trained in these areas. Pupils are confident that there is clear support for them concerning all aspects of social media and online safety.
- Excellent transitional arrangements have been put in place with local feeder schools. Their leaders are keen to praise the ever improving links with St Michael's and are appreciative of the projects undertaken during the last two years across numerous curricular areas. Pupils in year seven spoke openly of how happy they feel in school.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The Catholic Life is central to the identity of St Michael's, which drives the daily culture, standards, improvements and achievements.
- The highly effective governors and directors are a driving force in maintaining the distinctive and vibrant Catholic ethos of the school. Leaders at all levels are fully committed to providing the best possible Catholic education for all pupils.
- The school's well designed professional development programme prioritises the importance of the Catholic Life and mission of the school. There are excellent opportunities for staff to reflect on their own faith journey, explore the liturgical themes of the Church's year and lead worship.
- Parents are very proud of the school. They spoke warmly of the highly inclusive nature of the school, describing it as a place of faith where their children feel safe, secure and genuinely cared for. They highlighted the massive transformation under the current headteacher. They believe he embodies the Gospel Values putting the Catholic faith into action. Support staff also highlighted as a brilliant asset to the community.
- Pupils have a real affection for their school. They know that increasing numbers of their friends want to come to St Michael's due to its excellent reputation.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship is outstanding.

- There is a real enthusiasm for Collective Worship at St Michael's. All tutor times begin with a prayer each morning on a common theme across the school. These are well planned, resourced and are a normal part of the daily routine. Pupils are encouraged to write, choose and lead class prayers. Flexibility is encouraged within these morning prayers. Excellent examples were observed during the inspection, linked to pupils' daily lives and challenges.
- Year group assemblies include pupil led prayer and moments of quiet reflection. A reverent and respectful atmosphere was created in those observed. The warm relationship between pastoral leaders, tutors and pupils was obvious even in this formal setting.
- Almost all pupils spoke highly of their assembly experiences in school. They particularly enjoy and value those acts of worship in which they are actively involved. They look forward to the Holy Week celebrations and assemblies each year and their contributions to these. It is obvious that these services have had a major impact on the majority of pupils.
- Pupils' responses to prayer are genuine. In interview, pupils and some staff discussed how worship in school has assisted them to reflect upon their own spiritual development.
- Pupils lead liturgy every Thursday morning in the chapel. They choose a theme and are imaginative and creative in the presentation of their topic. They have a clear confidence in their ability to do this. They choose their own video clips, write the prayers and form PowerPoints to use in their services. Their liturgies also include moments of quiet reflection.
- The pupil liturgy group are extremely proactive raising £600 for a new nativity set in school this year. They are a forwarding thinking group who are determined to recruit more pupils to ensure its sustainability.
- Pupils at St Michael's actively seek opportunities to adopt responsibility and leadership roles in acts of Collective Worship and other areas. They are confident in approaching senior staff with their ideas and believe that they are listened to, taken seriously and given opportunities.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is good.

- Prayer is central to the life of the school. Staff and pupils recognise that opportunities for worship provided by the school are key to strengthening their community and self-identity.
- Pupils embrace the prospect of taking part in retreats. They spoke warmly of the residential visits to Ampleforth and the Emmaus Youth Village. Pupils would welcome further opportunities to encounter God through these experiences.
- Opportunities exist for staff to deepen their own spiritual formation, including the biannual staff retreat, which is highly valued. One member of staff is currently undertaking the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.
- Many staff and pupils are keen to contribute more to the planning, delivery and evaluation of prayer and worship in school. The lay chaplain encourages pupils to lead prayer through the liturgical seasons.
- There are good resources for staff and pupils to develop liturgies. The Religious Education department offer specialist support to the lay chaplain as does the MAT chaplaincy coordinator.
- The Religious Education department have assisted in providing support for new staff and pupils regarding Collective Worship.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- The highly effective headteacher and many staff lead and attend the Collective Worship. Consequently, they are well placed to evaluate and plan developments in this area. There are many outstanding role models for pupils and new staff.
- The views of all stakeholders are sought in assessing the effectiveness of Collective Worship. Governors are well informed of what takes place in their regular updates and are secure in monitoring the quality and impact of Collective Worship.
- Prayer is an integral part of school life. All staff briefings are enhanced with prayerful reflection and it is an integral part of all staff training events. The lay chaplain spoke of the strong support from the Religious Education department in inducting new staff and pupils into the school.
- The lay chaplain is supported in organising various well-planned acts of worship including, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Stations of the Cross.
- Parents admire the efforts of leaders of the school in ensuring worship is a prominent feature of school life and value their invitations to events.
- Staff appreciated the specialist support offered as part of the CPD programme in preparation for Advent.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is good.

- Pupils enjoy their lessons and behaviour for learning is outstanding. They are enthusiastic about their lessons and rate them very highly. The quality of work pupils produced in class and for homework is of a very high quality.
- The enthusiasm of staff teaching Religious Education is tangible. Lessons are well planned with a wide range of teaching strategies used effectively. Examples of paired work, group work and the use of writing frameworks are a feature of many lessons. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and expect the highest possible standards from their pupils.
- The three year average of GCSE results at 72% is above the national average (NA). The results in 2015 were above the NA; in 2016 they were very close to the NA. There was a noticeable dip in key stage four results in 2017 to 66% below the NA of 71%. Staffing instability and the absence of key staff throughout 2017 contributed towards this dip. As a result the progress of several groups including male and disadvantaged pupils has become a cause for concern.
- The school has robust actions in place to address the dip in 2017. Current data collections have shown that Religious Education is on track to perform close to the standard of English, which experienced a major rise in attainment over recent years and is now well above the NA. The school is therefore confident that results are on track to rise this year.
- The director of teaching and learning works very closely with the Religious Education and English departments and best practice is shared between staff within these areas. Standardisation of assessed tasks across the MAT is in place. The focus on building the skill and knowledge base of pupils is unrelenting. Carefully planned and organised intervention is now in evident. Examples of assessments from year nine onwards demonstrate that the majority of pupils are now confident in tackling exam based questions, which are built into almost every lesson.
- Very ambitious targets are set for pupils throughout key stage three and four. These involve pupils making at least four levels of progress between entry and the end of key stage four. Most pupils met these aspirational targets at the end of year nine in 2017.
- Tracking of current key stage three pupils is rigorous. At the end of term one, year seven and year nine pupils were already exceeding their termly targets. Year eight pupils were on target. Pupils know both their targets and their current working levels.
- Tracking of current key stage four pupils indicates that results for students in both year ten and year eleven will exceed current NA.

- Pupils are developing a range of skills to assist their understanding and encourage them to become independent learners. Pupils are challenged in lessons and staff expectations are very high. Observation and work scrutiny evidenced the progress which pupils are making in their learning.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.

- The majority of teaching in Religious Education is good or outstanding.
- The head of department ensures that schemes of work are in place and in line with Bishops' Conference requirements. Due to the collaborative nature of the department, schemes of work are also in place to support staff in the transition to the new GCSE, making this process seamless.
- Core members of the Religious Education department are highly skilled and committed to constantly driving improvement in their subject. Improving the progress of each pupil is viewed as a priority.
- Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and set high expectations for learning in Religious Education. Pupils respond positively and apply themselves well.
- Carefully planned and differentiated work was a feature of lessons observed. The pace and creative use of resources of several lessons was superb.
- Pupils know their targets and their current working levels. Any aspect of pupil underperformance is identified more rapidly than in the past and intervention strategies are swiftly applied. Intervention is very well planned and booked in through the school information system. Parents and pupils are made aware in advance of the intervention sessions which must be attended.
- The quality of monitoring and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding and assessment for learning is embedded. Self and peer assessment are part of the normal routine. Pupils respond well to staff feedback and regularly make necessary additions and adjustments to improve the quality of their responses.
- Data is collected four times a year and progress is evaluated and reported to the senior leadership team and governors. It is used effectively with departmental meetings to examine pupil level data and to plan progression routes for individual pupils.
- Pupils make effective use of exam structured material from year nine onwards. Writing frameworks, prompts and colour coded differentiated materials are used effectively to assist pupils of all levels to improve their skills and responses.
- Monitoring and assessment files are kept up to date and include tracking data from all classes. Pupil performance is assessed through assessment tasks which are standardised across the MAT. Mock exams are carefully planned and used as a learning tool to assist pupils in making progress.
- Homework is now carefully planned and marked using the school's marking policy. This is helping to consolidate learning.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding.

- Leaders in St Michael's are ambitious for their pupils. They have high expectations for all and are taking the necessary steps to ensure that high standards of attainment and progress are met.
- Standards in Religious Education are closely scrutinised by the governors and school leaders. They realise that being just above NA is the minimum baseline for the school. They are acutely aware of the need to raise both attainment and progress above NA for several underperforming groups at key stage four.
- Ongoing and rigorous challenge for both staff and pupils are now being embedded. Governors are clear that these must be maintained for successful outcomes to be achieved.
- Lesson observation, learning walks and work analysis are used to monitor staff performance. Gaps in progress for pupils are well known and are being monitored very closely by leaders.
- The allocation of curriculum time for Religious Education is in line with diocesan requirements. The department is very well resourced.
- Support from senior staff and the MAT is in place for the recently appointed head of department. Strong links with the English department are also being forged.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

HOW EFFECTIVE THE SCHOOL IS IN PROVIDING CATHOLIC EDUCATION:

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CATHOLIC LIFE:

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

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The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

1

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP:

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship.

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

2

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

2

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.

1

How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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SCHOOL DETAILS

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| School name | St Michael's Catholic Academy |
| Unique reference number | 139656 |
| Local authority | Stockton |
| This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Séamus Cunningham the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese under canon 806 of Canon Law. For voluntary aided schools it also fulfils the responsibility the Governing Body has to inspect the school under s48 of the Education Act 2005. | |
| Chair of governors | Mary Toth |
| Head teacher | Andrew Ramsey |
| Date of previous school inspection | May 2011 |
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